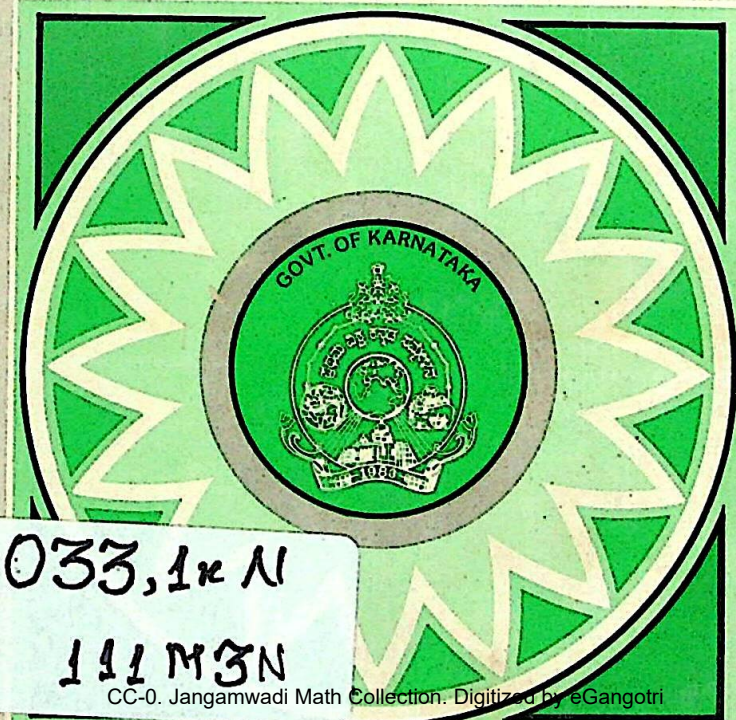


20th Century Kannada Poetry

(SELECTIONS)



Edited & Translated by
SUMATHEENDRA NADIG



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& Tr.

20th century Kannada

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**TWENTIETH CENTURY
KANNADA POETRY**

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20th CENTURY KANNADA POETRY

Edited & Translated

. by

SUMATHEENDRA NADIG

Foreword

by

NISSIM EZEKIEL



VISWA KANNADA SAMMELANA

14/3, Nrupathunga Road

BANGALORE-560 002

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To
Sibnarayan Ray
and
P. Srinivasa Rao

R. GUNDU RAO
Chief Minister



VIDHANA SOUDHA
BANGALORE.
DATE: 18. 12. 1982

THE RESOLVE AND THE REALISATION

Karnatak's historical heritage is more than two thousand years old. During this period, the history of this land has been glorified by the profuse and rich growth of its language, literature, art and culture.

The essential spirit of a land is hidden in its cultural foundation. In order that this foundation is strong enough, and that the cultural heritage rises to prosperity and that great heights are achieved, endless efforts should be carried on.

Though interwoven with the Indian culture, Kannada has got its own inherent qualities as well as culture.

In order to depict the glorious heritage of Karnataka, against current developments and in order to proclaim it to the world at large, the first World Kannada Sammelan is being organised at Mysore, which is one of the dominant cultural centres of Karnataka. This, I believe, is a historical event. In order that this Sammelan becomes a grand success,

and that its sweet memory will remain with us for a long time; many schemes have been taken up. One of these has been to bring out cheap editions of the celebrated works of great writers in Karnataka. Under this scheme, we are publishing one hundred and two works and seventeen anthologies. In this literary series, apart from poetry, novels, dramas and thought-provoking books, anthologies which reveal the spirit and variety in Kannada have also been included. At the same time, to introduce the fragrance of Kannada writing to non Kannada people, we have been publishing the English translations of some selected works as well. We feel that our efforts will not go in vain, if sympathetic readers would read and enjoy these works. At the same time, we will have the feeling that the purpose of holding this Sammelana, would have been fulfilled.

The expert members of the literary committee have taken great pains in selecting these works. Luckily, there has been no dearth of great works in Kannada. In this background, the difficulty of choosing only a definite number of works, can be well understood. Even then, I believe, the literary committee has done this task in a manner appreciable to all. It is my duty to thank this committee. The writers who have obliged to publish their works under this scheme, have accredited themselves. I have to remember with gratitude the liberal help they have rendered on this occasion.

(viii)

If this series of books will find good response in the hearts of Kannadigas our resolve will have been realised. I can proudly say that this effort is without a precedent. I humbly pray to mother Bhuvaneshwari that She brings all good to us, by blessing us in this particular endeavour.

ಎ. ಸುಬ್ರಹ್ಮಣ್ಯಂ

Chief Minister.



FOREWORD

Indian poetry in English translation rarely provides more than glimpses of its original. As a rule, the reader grasps only the meanings and some of the sentiments behind or within it. The poetic essence eludes him. To get at that essence, if he is seriously interested, he reads Introductions and Surveys of the relevant language, literature and cultural tradition. This seems to help in the beginning, but later the events, movements and critical opinions dissolve into a mist which makes appreciation of the poetry even more elusive.

I know, because I have tried. Virtually since the time my reading of Indian poetry in English translation acquired its focus and motives, I have taken every opportunity to remain in touch with it. Sometimes, I have enjoyed the good fortune (and it really was enjoyment) of editing translations or collaborating in making them. Whenever possible, I have published or helped to publish such

translations as appeared to me likely to satisfy the English - speaking reader in India and abroad.

That has been my criterion : do the translations satisfy, at least partially if not fully, those accustomed to reading poetry in English? I have asked myself what I get out of a particular example in this context and whether others are likely to share my pleasure. I have never associated myself with translations that merely express an enthusiasm for a particular poet or group of poets. These are tributes to the originals by the very fact of treating them as worthy of translation, but no more. In other words, they please the translator and often the poets concerned, but evoke no response or only a negative one from the readers for whom they are intended.

Literate members of an Indian language community are naturally happy and proud when one of their writers is translated into English. The knowledgeable in this area have learnt to be sceptical. They know that only in exceptional cases is the effort significant,

that good translations require an extraordinary combination of circumstances and factors, that the translated work is generally doomed to stay in obscurity, even when it does achieve a measure of communication. There are simply not enough readers willing to give it a chance. Their needs make them look elsewhere for the pleasure and the prestige of literary pursuits.

Consider the Indo-English poets, among whom I am counted. Very few of them, in my experience, have shown a sustained willingness to become acquainted with Indian poets in English translation. In addition to the English poetry they read, whatever its national source, they read poetry in translation from every part of the world—except India. When they make the effort, they are easily discouraged. They would certainly not spare any of their energy for studying the tradition of an Indian language and its culture in order to improve their understanding of the available English translations. The names of the eminent in such Indian traditions mean nothing to them. Their eyes are on the fixed stars of Europe and America, though turning to any others that

may appear on the horizons of fame through international awards or honours. Only Indians writing in the Indian languages, particularly because they do not even win such awards, completely fail to attract their attention.

The situation is equally bad, so far as this fact is concerned, in each of the Indian languages. A Tamil or Gujarati poet, for example, will eagerly read poetry in English translation except when it is from Panjabi or Oriya, let us say. Perhaps there is a little more interest when the Panjabi or Oriya poet is translated into Tamil or Gujarati, but not much more. No doubt there are complex social and cultural reasons for this, which have their own psychic validity. Yet, it has a bad effect on the Indian literary scene as a whole. What may be called Indian Literature, as a total expression of Indian national life, suffers greatly.

Two kinds of Indian translators function in this cultural setting. One may be called the innocent if not the foolish who rush in where angels ... and the other the defiant. The latter

know the odds very well but are not to be put off by them.

There is hope for these translators because they may go on to offer better translations themselves or provoke others to do so. Of course, even bad translators may produce the same effect on others, but we give them no credit for it, because their work leaves a bad taste in the mouth, creates embarrassment and shame, not legitimate critical dissatisfaction, not mere doubts and reservations.

Since the translator of the Kannada poems in this anthology, Mr. Sumatheendra Nadig, is a friend of mine, and is familiar with some of my literary concerns, he asked me to write a Foreword. I have formulated my view of the literary and cultural problems which make translation in India a peculiarly hazardous task. I hope Mr. Nadig and his readers will find that view relevant to the evaluation of his achievement, even if obliquely.

I find Nadig's translations very readable. They have the great merit, from my viewpoint,

of clarity and simplicity. No phrase does violence to the English language. There is a theory of translation which disapproves of this, on the ground that in some cases such violence is demanded by the original.

It is good to remember that deviations from the norm, so to speak, are valid when they have a relationship to the language in which a poem is written. This validity cannot be transferred to the language of translation.

Since every theorist of translation allows that a measure of loss in significance is unavoidable, whatever the qualities of the original, it follows that in the cases suggested by my argument a further loss should be acceptable. Otherwise, poets of the translation become merely unreadable. Is that not to be counted a loss ?

Nadig's translations can be read with pleasure because he is truly at home in English. And Kannada is not only his mother-tongue; he knows its literature and culture. Besides, he is a poet, being which is always a source of

strength in a translator of poetry. His anthology has obviously benefitted from all these factors.

December 1982.

NISSIM EZEKIEL

Department of English,
University of Bombay,



20th Century Kannada Poetry

A General Introduction

Ramachandra Sharma, a senior poet, recently translated one hundred English poems into Kannada, and called them adaptations. I have ventured to translate Kannada poems into English. Though I have not departed much from the original, atleast in a few cases my translations too have become adaptations.

In this kind of cultural exchange the difficulties are many. One of the difficulties has to do with what Allen Ginsberg referred to in one of his letters as "*Precise local Indian reference - mind - touchstones.*" And the other difficulty, again in the words of the American poet is: "The problem of knowing enough about east and west never seems to have been solved." Taking a hint from Allen Ginsberg's

reaction to some translations of Adiga's poems I have reduced in a few cases the "Precisely so precise a set of references." I have retained certain references so that the flavour of the original is not lost, entirely.

It is said that poetry is what is lost in translation. Though this is largely true of a kind of lyrical poetry which relies heavily on verbal magic, it is only partially true of poetry which is meditative or highly imaginative. Poetry has something to 'say.' We might call that 'something,' vision or world view. Translation might lose the linguistic subtleties to a great extent, but yet it can retain the force and vitality of the poem which is expressed through vibrant images or passionate thoughts which are 'as immediate as the odour of a rose'. I have tried to select the poems which have something to 'say', or those which contain vibrant images. May be in some cases, I have simplified the poems, but in many cases, I hope I have made Kannada poetry accessible to sensitive and intelligent non-kannada readers.

The poems in this anthology represent the *Navodaya*, the *Navya*, and *Post-navya* trends in 20th century kannada poetry. The first phase, *Navodaya*, which dominated upto 1950 is represented by Masti Venkatesha Iyenger, P. T. Narasimhachar, K. S. Narasimha Swamy and others. These poets have a sort of kinship with English Romantic Poets. In the first phase the inspiration came from the efforts of B. M. Srikantaiah, a professor of English, who translated some lyrics from Palgrave's 'Golden Treasury'. He adapted some of the elements of Kannada prosody to suit the lyric structure of the romantic poets. His prosodic examples and his use of the spoken language showed the way for other poets. The achievement of Bendre is extraordinary. He explored the possibilities of the Kannada language. He mesmerised our audience with his magical rhymes, his soaring imagination and meaningful play with the sound of words. He used our folklore for increasing the communicative value of his poetry. Gopala'krishna Adiga who has converted Bendre's influence into his strength

considers Bendre to be the greatest poet of the age. The other important poet of this movement is K. V. Puttappa who is also known as Kuvempu. Like Bendre, he also experimented with a variety of stanza forms. Just as Wordsworth celebrated the Lake District, Kuvempu celebrated the Malnad area. The other poets who extended the range of this school are Kadengodlu Shankara Bhatta, K. S. Narasimha Swamy, G. S. Shivarudrappa and others.

The second phase, *Navya* which dominated till 1970 is represented by M. Gopalakrishna Adiga, Ramachandra Sharma, Gangadhar Chittal and others. In the early stages, these poets showed an affinity to the modern poets of England. The poet who took the lead in the 50s was Gopalakrishna Adiga. He attacked the poetry of the first phase when it started declining. The signs of decadence, he pointed out were to be found in the wooly mysticism, the excessive musicality, lack of toughness, easy resolutions and stock responses. Adiga charged the Navodaya Poets for their lack of

contemporaneity and escapism. He also said that their poetry failed to pay attention to the wholeness of experience because they did not pay attention to structuring their experiences.

Adiga gave currency to such terms as 'Smell of the Soil' 'Poet's vocation' 'integrity' 'Contemporaneity' 'Spoken language and Speech rhythms'. His poetry draws innumerable words from English, Urdu and Persian which have become part and parcel of the spoken language. In place of the musical or stanzaic patterns of the previous poets, he used 'Free Verse' and the dramatic utterance. He used 'irony' to accommodate contradictory feelings and as a principle of presenting the wholeness of experience. His best poetry is personal, social, political and metaphysical at the same time. Perhaps no other poet in the world has successfully written so many excellent political poems as Adiga has done. He has a keen eye for politics and for more than 30 years has been the voice of 'Opposition'. He is committed to democracy and thinks that "both

Leftism and Rightism are extremes which exaggerate a partial truth..... Whenever there seems to be an over emphasis on the Leftist aspect of social thinking I have thought it the duty of an intellectual to stress the virtues of Rightism so that a balance may be achieved. If the vices of Rightism should prevail I should think it my duty to fight against them, set forth the virtues of Leftism so that once again a balance may be achieved''. It is no wonder that this poet has been considered to be the greatest Indian poet.

Adiga's poetry made a great impact. Even poets like Bendre and Narasimha Swamy, G. S. Shivarudrappa and Channaveera Kanavi recognised the modern school of poetry and some of them turned experimental and contributed to the range and variety of *Navya* poetry. Ramachandra Sharma with his effective readings of his poems was a great influence on the younger generation. Gangadhara Chittal who is claimed to be a 'modern' has written the life studies of his family members, which

are contemplative and lyrical. Poets like P. Lankesh, K. S. Nisar Ahmed, K. V. Tirumalesh, Chandrashekar patil, Siddalinga Pattanashetty, Chandrashekara Kambar, B. R. Lakshmana Rao and others have contributed to the development of modern poetry. All these poets have widely used 'Irony' and 'Free verse'.

After the 70s a reaction to *Navya* poetry has set in. To this phase belongs the recent lyrical poetry of this translator and H. S. Venkatesha Murthy. Poets like Siddalingaiah who are members of the 'Dalit' group and 'Bandaya' group have accused the modernists of writing poetry for poetry's sake and for making poetry 'difficult' to the common man. They approve 'poetry of protest' and they expect poetry to be an instrument of social change. Their revolutionary fervour is sometimes expressed through violent images. Siddalingaih uses lyricism to evoke the brotherhood of man and to persuade his listeners to build a society based on equality and love. This is, broadly the spectrum of 20th century kannada poetry.

I am grateful to the poets who have extended their cooperation. I regret that I did not get permission to represent the achievements of D. R. Bendre and K. V. Puttappa. I must thank poet Nissim Ezekiel for writing a Foreword focussing 'the literary and cultural problems which make translation in India a peculiarly hazardous task'. I am happy, he has liked my translations. I feel indebted to Sri K. Jayacharya, Additional Director, Viswa Kannada Sammelana, without whose persuasion this anthology would not have seen the light of the day, so soon. Finally I thank Sri Ranganatha Rao, of Parishree Printers for the attention he has given to the layout and get up of this book.

Date : 27-12-1982

SUMATHEENDRA NADIG

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M. Govinda Pai

The Parrots

You, my own words ! I float you
On the waves of time as they float lamps;
Let the breath of the world get ready to greet you
Live as long as you are energetic.

As when the fledgelings grow wings
The mother bird sends them all out
And gathers them again in the nest ;
So, I collect all of you in this book.

Did I say you're mine ? As you were
Going you stopped for a while
In my heart and sang. And you made
Me sing. How can I say you're mine ?

If on their way a flock of parrots
Pause for a while in a garden
How do they belong the garden ?

D. V. Gundappa

Wild Flower

Prepare my mind
O Lord
To let my life bloom like a wild flower.

Let me not gloat
That I am the one
Who keeps mankind happy,
And let me not crave for public acclaim.

The Jasmin that in a forest blooms
Quietly expresses its essential fragrance
And remains hidden behind the leaves.
It is not ego-centred and in all its modesty
Finds fulfillment in life.

Destroy the topsyturvy thinking
That I am the giver

And the world is at the receiving end.
Teach me the natural goodness of a tree
That lives
Giving to mankind, shelter, flowers and fruits.

Sayings of a Simpleton

Sisyphus tried to roll the rock uphill,
And when he reached the top, it moved down again
That is the pattern of man's progress
—says the simpleton.

Do you ask the Sea to return to Himavanta
And come back in a different form ?
The spirit of man moves by contexts
And doesn't move blindly—says the simpleton.

Even in the past there were wise men
There were well wishers and men of achievements.
Too many doctors might start a new disorder,
Modernisation must be controlled—says the simpleton.

Don't destroy the foundation in your attempt
To set things right. You know only to loosen it,
But do you know to build it again ? Is it right
To uproot the plant in order to trim it ?
—says the simpleton.

Masthi Venkatesha Iyengar ('Srinivasa')

The Silkworm Called the Soul

The old woman is tired of her life
And feels she has nothing more to offer;
She wonders what hour must come for Him
To call her. This life is stale. The fruit
Of breath is overripe. She wonders
Why the parrot of death doesn't come
To peck and eat, and she waits, importunately
Questioning, why her life should not separate

From the stalk. Why is she so eager to die!
How can we know? the young silkworm
When she was spinning her cocoon with her spit
How could she know that in the darkness
Of a few days she would grow the wings of old age?
The silkworm says, 'Enough of sleep.'! At the moment
Of freedom she doesn't relish the dream like web
of life.

P. T. Nārashimhachar

(‘Pu. thi. Na’)

The Shadow

There flies the great Hawk in the sky
Below is his shadow;
The bird goes where he pleases
And the shadow follows.

Over ground and over houses
Over ponds, wells and trees
Over creepers, over mounds and hollows
Runs the shadow.

As mysterious as the wind it runs ;
What is there to check its speed?
It knows no barrier,
Weariness nor stop.

Looking at it today I wonder,
Was Gandhi a shadow like this?
Wherever took the Lord's whim
There he quietly followed Him.

T. N. Sreekanthiah

What is This ?

You join the others smiling
With me you're always growling—
Is it love or is it hate ?

You listen to others with pleasure
My pleasing words are harsh to you—
Is it love or is it hate ?

My every gesture seems wrong to you
You quarrel with me over slight mistakes—
Is it love or is it hate ?

When I woo you, you call it feigning,
If I move away quietly you think I don't love you—
Is it love or is it hate ?

Do you think I always blame you ?
Even this hostility is dear to me—
Is it love or is it hate—What is this ?

K. S. Narasimhaswamy

All kinds of Dreams

Around me the moonlight's blaze
And smoke of flowery perfume ;
Forest songs and hindering plants ;
Open hood of serpent and death,
And a dead end.
Sorrow while you are away,
As if the earth is still,
New lights and shadows crowd around—
All kinds of dreams !

On a silver mountain a golden swing
And there a girl who is singing,
Having traversed the moon
Alighting on the stars, sadly as if she spoke,
“ Why are you sad so long I am here ? ”
As if she smiled—
All kinds of dreams !

Night with starry eyes like god's shadow,
And the muse is choked,
Sombod's veena, but the fingers are still !
The silence is bare like unkempt hair.
Under the lamp is shadow and
The whole world is asleep.
Shall I sleep or keep a vigil ?
All kinds of dreams !

On every road a girl with diamond eyes
Lovely likely a berry,
Smooth of steps ! so light, so elated ;
Her words are sweet, her dance is sweet ;
As if she came tired along
The colourful shop street
All kinds of dreams !

Take a look inside the garden pond
Stone has flowered into a damsel !
Her eyes open to the sculptor's chisel
Long long ago !
The poor poet sweetly says, they are blind !
Yet the stone's eyes are haunting—
All kinds of dreams !

Early morning breeze assumes the wanted shape
In your place. It becomes yourself
And sits on my cot and sleeps by me !
It appears on the ceiling

It shines in the window
It submerges in my heart
And plays like a precious fountain !
All kinds of dreams !

A Pair of Tongs

When winter comes they say 'How very cold !'
When summer comes they say 'How hot it is !'
When it rains they say 'it's a curse !'
Beware ! There's nothing to please them.

They desire flowers, when golden sprouts are there,
They praise the fruits, when flowers bloom,
They criticise the size of the fruit,
if fruits you offer
Beware ! There's nothing to please them.

They ask the standing, why they stand
If they lie down, they call it disdain ;
If they run, they taunt them as soon as they turn
Beware ! there's nothing to please them.

When they read your writing they ask you to rewrite !
When you revise it, they will still be judging.
God knows what they want ! They are highly critical !
Beware ! There's nothing to please them.

Your Name

Your name is red like the blossomed lotus
of sirigere waters :

Your name is light from the flaming torches
that adorn temple towers.

Your name is there in the eyes of the calf
that gambols in Joisa's field :

Your name is there in the milk that is dropped
while the calf sucks her mother.

Your name rings in the voice of the peacock
that dances in the garden with flowers :

Your name swings in the perfume
that emanates from Ketaki petals.

Forgotten behind the lips, behind the clouds
your name is withheld like moonlight :

Whenever remembered your name spills like the light
of full moon on beds of flowers.

When your presence is there, your name is so short
that it melts away in you :

When you are away from home, your name lingers
in my house and in my mind like the river breeze.

Aphrodite

"Pick up the pearls and diamond
from the golden bowl
filled with rose water" the elders said
and they blessed the newly wed.
As fingers touched the fingers
inside the water love was born !
Aphrodite arose from the ocean's foam
The goddess of Love and Beauty !

"Look at the star Arundhati "
The elders said, and the newly wed
lost themselves in each other's eyes,
until the elders called them.
To the lovely town gate built by desire
like rainbow-flag appeared Love !
Aphrodite arose from the ocean's foam
The Goddess of Love and Beauty !

After the newly wed were blessed at the threshold
they were on the same bed.
When they wondered whether it was bondage or
freedom

If speech is silver, silence was gold !
Couldn't this dream be stone for some more time !
How soon the stone turned into a damsel !
Love was born !
Aphrodite arose from the ocean's foam
The Goddess of Love and Beauty !

Tungabhadra

This Tungabhadra – not the river – my daughter,
twelve months old,
is my darling. If there is a storm in Madras
and if it rains ten drops in Mysore
she catches cold. If sunlight falls on the street
she suffers from heat.

This Tungabhadra – not the river – my year old
daughter
fills the house with her talk and playfulness. She
slashes the darkness of the inner eye. Everyday
We coax her, calling her sister and mother and
bathe her and wrap her in warm clothes,
burn incense in her room and singing in a low key
rock her cradle
until our arms ache. But she wouldn't sleep.
She looks askant, raises her head, smiles and makes
us smile

This year old daughter
watches all my movements. If I cross the threshold
she comes to the door to pester me....until evening
she rules her mother. At night she is like a medal

on my chest. This daughter if she opens her mouth
I see a small rice in the top row and a dot of milk
in the bottom row. She has round face and eyes
stretching to the ears,
You can count the hair on her head. Those few hair
are tied into a plait; if not they get entangled
into a mysterious knot.

My year old daughter's courage
is admirable. Often, if the father, in his short temper
scolds her, she rushes to her mother. If the mother
in her bad mood pushes her away, crawling and
crying,
she will reach the father to climb his lap.

This family is a sea. I form one
of its shores and my wife the other.
To and fro Tungabhadra's ship
carries the full moon. I don't have the courage,
nor many such lives like mine. We can't think
of the other shore if this shore is angry.
Just as this child is capable, we can't think of a
consoling haven.
Such faith doesn't keep us moving.

We stand midway thinking
of the great distance we have come, doubting
if there is another shore to greet us.
with such doubts our way is a thorny forest
in which we have lost our way.

The Black Boy

As I walked along the crowded street
After the evening shower,
Someone seemed to speak to me
His words had magic power.

I was startled as I heard his words
And looked around to see,
I saw a blackboy cross the lights
He was far away from me.

At home my nephew, a little child
A prattler that he is,
Climbed my back and pulled my hair
His laughter filled my ears.

The blackboy of the evening hour
was haunting me throughout;
I saw him in the little child
I heard him in his prattle,
I felt him in the food that night
And the bed in which I curled;
The black boy filled my world.

I didn't sleep all that night
I didn't tell any one,
My eyes only betrayed
That the black boy had me won.

From the Pomagranate next to my window
From its reddish thorns,
From its half-split fruit,
From the soil below it,
The black boy rose and said to me,
Come to the market place.

I decked my hair with flowers
All of them were gay,
Lily, Roses, Jasmine and May.
They were brighter than the day,
But still my mind could only see
The eyes of the black boy beyond the dust.

I went to him without a hint
I walked the way he had called,
He is not at all a black boy
His body is all of gold.
He patted my back and held my hand.
He walked with me the road.

A Small Matter

Among the midnight dark clouds
which swarm like bees
full-moon's eye is open.
Stars have come to the street.
And the breeze is singing
to the tune of the rain.

Here at home, a baby in a cradle
near a cot, is lying naked
with half-shut eyes.
The drowsy mother's hand
pulls the blanket over the child.
Again the child kicks the blanket
and plays in its nakedness.
In the corner a dim lamp is burning.

Is it right or wrong? No answer.
In all quarters the world is asleep
without speech or looking.
In our sleep and waking
A guardian hand is working
And uncaring this
The child is kicking the blanket.

Maniamma's Marriage

She's still a baby
She's already being married !
She's not yet in her teens
How can I think her a bride !

She's still a school girl
So early should she marry !
For her it's time to play
How can I think her a bride !

She's still at her counting table
So early should she marry !
She runs about in her frocks
How can I think her a bride !

Oho, it's the Saree's marriage !
It's the wedding of pipes !
Oho, it's the wedlock of eatables !
It's the marriage of Kith and Kin !

All the four vedas will bless,
The fire god will be a witness,
The bride will be a gift
And her parents will be relieved !
Oh, the auspicious time of marriage !

The little playful darling
will be taken in a procession
The innocent little child
Has to be simply bothered !

The little girl on her mother's lap
Has to take the marriage oath !
In another year or two utmost
She has to sing a lullaby !

Shall I laugh or cry
As she's getting married !
They have asked me to attend,
Is it marriage or child's play ?
I am awesfully puzzled.

M. Gopalakrishna Adiga

Prayer

Lord,

I am not one of those who ply deliriously
The well-known pumps of heraldic praise ;
Not one of those who have rheumatic backs
Having cringed like dogs for crumbs ;

I am not one who snuffs out his candle
And seeks like a leech, titillation through key-holes.
I am not one of those who bend their backs
for the delight of men, fattened by the passage of time;
Lord, I am not one of these.

Here is one who grins whithin,
Triumphant that his lifted lantern made the dawn ;
This fat rooster with his cultivated strut
Cannot bend his back ;
Lord, get rid of this dropsic bulge.

Each belch irrigates a blighted poem--
Destroy this strange harvest of foul belches
Of days and night.
Bless Father, that all that is eaten
Be properly assimilated into the blood - stream.

Let not raw, undigested chunks
Be vomited on to pieces of paper--
Arrange for natural outlets ;
Let everyone have a visa to one's private self.

Most importantly,
Teach the hygiene of mastication,
The way of chewing a morsel two and thirty times
And digesting it in the saliva stream.
Even if you cannot teach it
Let it not be forgotten
That it has not been learned.
Destroy the illusion that eating onions
Will sweeten one's breath.
Prick the balloon of inflated words
with the pin of actuality.

Arrest the automated day - dreams
That open the sluice gates
To gain thighs, which play hide and seek
To the embrace ;
Do not rouse the ego to masturbation
With fantasy fairies who streak naked
In the open air ;

And in your infinite mercy
Send real women, with real thighs,
And unwrinkled skins
That can vibrate the soul,
And turn it on.

Do not send the guerilla hordes
To ambush me, every time I venture out and in.
Let the guests come home full-blooded,
And let the skinles spectures
Be nashed from my guest-list.

Let every ship reach its haven. Let it not
Be swallowed by whale-like thighs
And be made to rot.
Let import and export go on for ever ;
Especially, save the sane sexuality of the East,
Protecting it from the infection of the English pox.

The torch wavers in the wind. Even an electric lamp
Is vulnerable to a blow.
Your mountain of vapours condenses into semen
And digs into the thighs of the Earth,
And, in its arrogance spills itself everywhere.
The orgasmic esttacy
Thrills thorn as well as grass.
For a moment's fructified desire,
It takes months, years, and centuries
Of obstinerce, homosexuality, and perversion.

Father,
Teach us to work the miracle
Of nine months' gestation and delivery.

Teach us not to bend and to bend.
Teach the creative flame to challenge
The cheek of dawn, and yet,
Sustain itself against the tossing wind.
Teach us how not to become a tamed horse,
But a proud, wild one.

Similarly,
Let the capacity to bear the weight of the world
on our thighs
Settle into a habit.
Teach us how to be like you
Supreme in solitude,
Ecstatic in the attic.
Teach us the awareness of ejaculation
Between deserving thighs.

Lord,
This is half-hatched awareness,
Let the full-bodied Son of 'Vinata' break out of the
shell.

He stands glistening like a silver staff,
But under the weight of your thighs
Cushion - soft and flexible.

Song of the Earth

My birth was at the bottom rung of the Western Ghats
at a distance of three rolls only from the boiling
cauldron sea.

She welcomed me waving her outstretched coconut
branches,

She shook the rattle of arecanut bunch.

In the sugarcane press she sat at the teeth and made
me drink the ceaseless flow of affection.

In the paddy, wheat and maize fields with fleshy
songs she fed,

On the fragrant peaks of Jasmin, gorate and Mandara
she lulled me to sleep.

She sieved me with the Jamoon sounds that flowed
from the throats of birds.

To the universal form of the cloud in sky
she added the protoplasm of the Earth.

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Under everytree in the underwood the thickly fallen
Dhoopanut sprouts, shrieks and cries ;

Wherever the rain wand has touched the ups and
 downs there are sprouts, sapplings and grass;
 The rainbow intoxicating bulb like gorate flirts and
 giggles;
 The bee with tinkling anklets lifts the cup of Nanda-
 battalu to its lips.
 Sitting in the backyard, I the pearl diver dived down
 and deeper still;
 The green waves swashed and foamed ; there were
 winds and thunder;
 Blinded by the maddening colourful pearls at the
 bottom I dallied till the evening;
 Though I pulled out the winebag sticking to my lips,
 my fancy searched its spring.

* * * *

On the fence, at the edge of the field, on every inch
 of the grove
 There are maternity homes, pain, anxiety and laughter;
 the log sprouts-what beauty, what shrieks and cries!
 Nurses and Doctors move in and out-
 four persons always follow them;
 In the cradle shop the bamboo is cheap;
 The priest who christens children knows better the
 funeral rites;
 Packs and packs of worms crawl down to the earth
 from the slimy bark,

Flap their wings in the vaccum, clap and dance in the
gutters;
Under the scarching sun leechlike worms dwell on
decaying carrions.

* * * *

Oh what a thirst at the dawn for light.
In the dark waters of the Yamuna shines a stone on
the hood of the dark serpent;
Doors, windows, houses, towns and forests looked
in wonder,
The childlike camera eye clicked from every angle.
In the darkness driven room reel after reel was shown
on muslin curtain.
In the ins and outs of the estuary played a chain of
waves;
Pearl, gold, emerald, amethyst, red and yellow;
Wherever I fell I was in a snake-coupling;
Lips had the itch and thirst for an ocean:
I opened my eyes and listened to many colours,
My ears were full of green, white, yellow and red.
The cat with ghee smeared forehead was turning like
a top with its tail in the air;

She hugged me more like a mother;
She suffered me repeatedly in her womb;
She throttled birds to sing for me;
She cut the throats of sapplings to feed me.
This Dhritarastra love curshed this Bheema;
Nowhere was Krishna's grace.

My feet have roots in her, vainly I hitched my wagon
to the stars.
Like a spineless coward, I explored the endless path
in the bathroom of my mind.

I am stricken with the secret sin of Oedipus.
I rode a tractor, ploughed and thrashed
I sowed and grew atom bombs
Deadly bacteria was all my joy.

They call me on and on, those heavenly birds
With sixty invitations to the court of wind;
They whisper in my ears, haunt me again and again.
This magician was ineffectual; I got angry with myself,
I dashed my brain against the pillars and windows.
Beating my wings against the walls I shrieked.
I pecked out my feathers and piled them up on the
dinner plate.

* * * *

The colt neighed and danced, all round was grass
and gram.
With the bridle of gold and golden rein,
With a crown of colourful quills over the head,
Harnessed to a coach it danced till its ribs were
broken.

And then
'The body was heavy, the mind was heavier'
'How can the birde go to her in-laws ?

Only the God of Tirupati should help her'
'Those who pay for ale will all go to heaven'

Study of veda, shastra, purana, prayer and worship;
When the stock of oil is over

She makes a wick before a broken lamp;
Even then this Matron won't leave me, she raises the
smoke of chillies and scratches the shell for its
Kernel.

When I am carried in a bier, she can't come out;
She brings forth another child.

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In the lac - magic - house of Mother earth
Memory of Hastinapura was not kindled.

Whether it was constructed by Maya or Suyodhana
I need not doubt till I scratch a match.

I enjoyed myself there : I skated on the slippery floor
from the front yard to the inner darkness.

"Who goes there ? My mother ?"

"Mother ? what is this madness ? you stupid
fellow "

"Are you fury or fire, pray what can I do?

"If you are manly, kill me, can you ?"

Who pushed me into her gutter - womb ? which
trained - in - miscarriage witch?

Karna was swept by the waters; Radha became his
foster mother;

Kunti comes only to kill.

Her whole body is a maternity home and cemetery;
She indulges in autosexuality;

Tiger, Cheetali, Elephant, Ox, Ram, Mule, Donkey,
Mango 'Nerile', Jack - tree, Jaaji and 'Jaali'
These are her natural offsprings.

Why did the demon of heterosexual thirst rise in her
the moment I came in?

They have left me blindfolded in the forest;
They have raised a fence of wires;
They serve me salt water to drink and live coal
to eat;
They chain my leg and expect me to dance.

When I the guest arrived, came six friends to
greet me ;

The candle burns, all around is melted wax,
Finally the wick will only be cinders.

Mother Earth is only a step mother.

She is Suruchi to Uttanapada

The forest is the only direction left for Dhruva,
Aranyaka paved the path.

Take away all the colourful clothes you offered,
Take this coat, this shirt and this pyjama
Even this broken cottage is yours ; Take it away.

Unless I give away everything

there is no other way for me.

Otherwise how can I hold my head high,

and walk shoulder to shoulder with my equals?

Isn't it only by giving up the god-given armour and

sword

I can bare my heart's ambrosia?

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Viswamitra signalled "Trishanku, you move towards

heaven"

He hung in mid air like a bat.

It is as difficult to take out your feet from slough

As the struggle that goes on in the sky-cage of golden
wires.

Mire is dirty, as soon as one is born there

is the bier of the uterine fluid.

If it were all earth, a toy of mud, that would have
been something.

But even in this toy, there is a mechanism of breathing;

Beyond this machanism there is the conspiracy
of mysterious light.

The path of air has no footprints.

Look here, this is difficult :

what does anyone lose if dust goes to dust

Wind to wind, fire to fire,

Water to water and the element of sky to the sky?
Something remains –
an electric wire –

News from the beyond the stars and nebulae,
Weird shapes coming from the netherworld;
There is a trickster that mixes and plays them.
Some say they don't know where the switch is
having forgotten the head office address.
The remaining say it is still here.

In the dark narrow blind alley
We have to move groping the walls;
The lame on the shoulders of the blind
We have to watch our progress.

Adolescence

I

The princely growth of his moustache sprouting,
Everything is shielded from his eyes, as if
The halter around his neck is loosened, and
freedom

Flashes forever. As if
Grass, thicket, plant and hedge are all the same
For his growing horns.

Shreeni feels as if he is riding an Arab
horse;

He is outraged because the sky is high,
Because he cannot go back to his mother's womb,
Because his father was born before him ;
Because his mother weaned him.
In his rage, he engages in rhetoric,
And screaming, hops around three times.

II

At the curve of a treacherous road,
Against the prohibitive signposts,
He leaves the high road for a by-lane,
And tripping returns to the highway ;

Knees bruised, hands hurt, wings clipped
And face deformed ; yet craves for the poison-ivy
of the sky.

His hippy companions, riding the wind, peer
From the high branches, grin, and humming
To the monotone, Lullabies of self-absorption
Dose off. There is no one to admire the majesty
Of the mess in which the prince has fallen.
Yet, somehow if he crawls and does not feel
disgust at his
Own crawling, he may go beyond the narrow bonds;
Or else, he will be the jailor of his own
accursed prison.

III

I am sitting here, on a summer's day, on a
mound,
Under the burning sun, smoking a cigarette.
Somewhere, down there, my son sits
In the middle of five fires, crying.
I keep shouting his name ; alas, my son
Seems to have gone deaf. Is he really deaf?
Or is it
That he has his own language ?
My guts are twisted in anguish for him
During sleepless nights ;
His hippiedom has tumbled down from its
highs ;
I see my own reflection in his hapless state.

There is the cave door, beyond that
The great plane ;
Basketful of greens and fruits ;
Only growth has no limits.

Vulture

Look

Look up

a vulture !

Beneath the rip-rap sound of settling wings
a bubble like chicken of this earth
is crushed like an ant
by a bubble of the sky.

With only one co-co-rico

stopped this tap ;

the screech was sharp enough to
touch your pap ;

the silent noon-day baloon went to thousand scraps.

Now, what do you find here ? emptiness :

Under the chequered shade of the coconut tree
the searching sunlight has thrown its dice ;

In the loom of wind

the searching sun has woven the pall for hundreds.

The dead orange-coloured-naked-leaf
is recalling the day-light murder.

The railroad where a train has passed
Sways drunk with the silence.

Now nobody can read any more, the name of Beria
in the Russian Encyclopedia,
But the Behring Strait which swallowed up a vulture
still can be seen in the index.

* * * *

Half a minute ago, the chicken was there, dancing ;
not knowing that *the hard earth might give way*
and there may be slough in its place.

Even though the wind has been swept and washed
away
doesn't it resound in the cave, its innocent babble ?

Between being and non-being
flows the stream of sympathy :

While the wound was still alive it was blooming
inside,

Crystal-strong-pearl-shell-petal.

Around the naked cry for the death of krouncha
birds,
the Ramayana verse was woven silk.

This was a sprightly chicken :
Only a few days ago it was hatched,
When the wings grew strong
It had crossed the threshold.
Around the stick in the dung heap on the limited and
Unlimited time it had played the windtower karaga.
Feeling elated with the fresh wind out-side

it had jumped like the best horse and touched the
limit of its boundary.

In the golden light of the Sun it had sailed as on a
life-buoy
and had moved within and without like the weaver's
spindle.

In the dance-circle around the manure-pit it had
played the chameleon dance.

To make the dance sweeter, had scratched the earth
and made a breakfast of a worm ;

Just a few seconds ago !

But now it is nowhere :

In the huge tree of the many branches a branch broke
down is a hearsay ;

The sand particles on the sea-shore was carried away
by the wind; now it is a formless, meaningless noise.

Even without crossing his limit this innocent fellow
fell into the limit of the sky :

When he was about to swallow the earthworm in the
forceps-grasp of his beak he was swallowed straight
away.

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There is a circle of moon and stars
at the circumference.

One within the other in an order.

It is a world of limits.

Well oiled wheel progeny

role on effortlessly on metalled roads.

Within the limits of one life

there are limits for hundreds.

under the boots cockroaches, moths, white ants
scorpions.

None has the right to leave his limit

and to commit aggression on another's border.

Even the arrow has to follow a line.

The sword, the bomb, sharp edge of tooth and nail,
have to keep watch on their border—

Beyond the limits of the expansive waters
there are other limits, in hundreds.

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This is a gigantic spider's web

At the centre of the silk soft multi-walled fort

While he meditates,

a fly enters his mouth at this side

and at the other side, from the navel

Comes out in the form of a *gossamer thread*.

Starting from his head office up to the boundary,
he patrols

with the usual style of a soldier with a rifle
talking shop.

He has no fear of attack,

But has only the grace of welcoming !

Keeping the door open

somewhere within he seems to play patience
hypocritically.

But he knows the technique of finishing his prey
the moment a fly touches his line.

This is an age-old story.

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Around the rotting vulture on the dungheap
The sprightly chicken goes gay ;
While the chicken dangles from the vulture's beak
in the sky
There wriggles a part of the worm on the earth.

Around my living room roars the wave of fear,
And hundreds of smiling sails are spread ;
In the aquarium of the ocean
Many a fish dance forgetting their limit.

The Well-Frog

1

Where are you now, you who walked shoulder to
shoulder with me
And favoured the sails with your breath,
Who got me visas to distant capitals
and dream islands,
My friend who gave me the slip, where are you now?

Just half-way down inside the belching grove
On the satiated bank of the cool lake
you tripped me, and, before I could blink, the fool,
You made a beeline for the blue.

Heavy-bodied I lie here like an orphan,
Flower, plant, creeper, tree, bush and nest
Make faces and giggle at me;
All around the hunters keep a mocking vigil.

The lame jack - tree stands with its yellowed leaves
High with brewed sunlight;
The banana plant with its cone-shaped bunch
Rots in the stem, transfusing the surrounding shoots
with its sap.

The rain clouds have stopped their loitering; corn is
ripe;

Streams, wells and springs are full of algae.

The wind that turns the wind mill with its bruised
neck,

Groans that this is the end of the race.

Exhaustion through deliveries is my only
gain for my faith in you.

Should I be like a well whose springs are dried ?
Awaken with your magic touch the suffocated,
seething springs,

And trigger them to life.

I go back in time; I desire to be
Rolled up in your magic blanket—
Wrapped up, I slide down the slope
To the beckoning sea, like a live fountain.

2

Then I used to be promptly present every dawn
On the edge of the wave, like fear on tiptoe;
As the sprial crown of the golden sun
pierced the foaming sea, there came

A tiny boat with a tiny mast and a tiny sail;
You were the oarsman; you splashed the waters,
And when the speeding boat hit the beach in a flash,
curving, stretching your arms, you hauled me in;

We sailed the seven seas at high and low tides;
We gasped for breath but rowed through out the day.
The tired boat was weighed down by rainbows and
precious pearls

When the land received it back.

Every minute was a great fair; my hands
pulled the juggernaut;

And your voice chanted the ritual slogans.
Our providential union was the source of power
For the voice and muscles of millions.

On the island house in the dark ocean
We played the naked game throughout the night;
So many wholesome eggs were laid by you and me.
Every single one had only your insignia and seal.

Nevertheless you are a con-man, I know....
When the teacher had stepped out, you the Bhagavatha
Clashed the cymbals and sang,
And I became the avatar of awesome Bheema and
grabbed a ruler for a club.

I wielded it like a mace, shouting a war - cry ;
By the time I had flashed it around twenty times
The vase was broken; my classmates roared with
laughter;

The bruises that embellish my back have become
an unhealing story.

Then we sat on either side of aea – saw ;
It was always lighter at your end ;
However, now and then you allowed it to be balanced,
And I didn't feel I was unbearably heavy.

3

Now the time has come for the fruit to fall and rot ;
For the termites to attack the green stems ;
For the planks of the juggernaut to weaken and
its rope to wear out ;
And for the damp to descend.

My weight grows day by day ; my end of the sea-saw
Licks the dust, and there
The end you ride touches the sky ;
Growing old and cataracted I try to discern your face
that is blurred.

Your voice is heard like a hundred waterfalls ;
Where I sit, a hundred roots start peeping out.
And when the sprouts contact the air, they dry up
Without your life-giving juices transfusing them.

I am Mr. Frog now, who has tasted the waters
of the seven ponds,

And hopping is my fact and life-style.
From the earth into the water and back again to
the earth,

My duty is to hop between the realms.

Bloated, I gasped and wriggled on the earth ;
Now I must get back to the bottom.
I will hide, buried in the smooth womb of mud.
Bloated, beyond limits, slimming is my only goal.

The air-light golden body springs up
From the clear water of the pond and plunges down ;
If I drown will the coconut feel lost ? And
Will the jack-tree become listless ?

I spent years acquiring this awareness ;
The jasmine radiates your smile ;
The mango gives out the shade of your love ;
I'll play here, it is all right : this is my new revolution.

Past

1

They haunt me, the secret foetuses of the past ;
The stale air of the sunken old well
rises on all fours crawling upside down
entwining the sunbeam that sings a lullaby
and charges towards the basil bush.

The stalk detached navel-cord and
the severed rat's tail quiver.
As I grope peering in the darkness
suddenly flashes a line of golden ore
like a wing burnt star flashing through the space.

2

Today's newspapers are full with the news of the past.
One part above water and seven underneath
the iceberg becomes all atonce a fiery word-erupting
snow covered innocent volcano.
Though the papers are closed
noiseless empty skeletons gather in the room,
with cleft feet groan, making dumb signs.
In the standing waters of the sky

spermatozoa rush to seek their goals.
Behind the curtain of the darkened stage
shining words wait for prompting.
Do they not desire the outside air surrounding the
colourful plants?

3

Shelterless forefathers wander in the wind
without knowing where they can incarnate.
I know the chants to drive away the ghosts,
but I forgot the chants which could make them gods.
In vain I wave the magic wand—
We trusted the purohits, but turned toward the west.
Atleast now we must delve deep into our ancient lore.
At the time of digging earth is foetus form.
Deeper and deeper thrust of the pickaxe
might show us the shining golden ore.
Excavating it, smelting and purifying it,
at least now we must learn
to shape them into our personal Gods.

4

The decaying water inside the well, goes up as vapour;
the sky becomes its field of action.
The unseen drop
In the dark womb of the clouds
is like the foetus form that waits for nine months.

For the pastness of vapour rain is the present form.

Prepare the fields for paddy and grains—

Turn them into beautiful gardens—

Temple towers will have golden peaks.

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Be Doing Something, Brother

Be doing something, brother, something, anything,
You must not simply be;
Pull out this plant, nip that little-sprout,
If you find a flower, crush it;
Wherever there is grass,
Burn it with your flaming torch.
Butterflies, parrots, sparrows, wherever, whenever—
Stalk them, catch them, pluck their wings, fur and
feather;
Where the wild elephant has run amuck
The jasmine sobs here, and the golden banana cries
there.

All around on your walls push-buttons parade
potency;
Close your eyes, and press a dozen; the earth, water
And the sky are all your golden goose,
Cut and rip them.
'Do or die' is the motto.
For the amazing dance of your genius on all fours
Disaster a minute is the test, brother.
Do something, act, act, quick
Who knows, maybe, while making a monkey,

You may end up making God Vinayak.
Winnowing to separate the chaff from the grain,
Weighing each thing in introspection—
that is part of the dead past,
Part of ghostly inheritance; isn't it brother?

There is the forest; cut it
Clean to the stump, slash it to make
Arches of Triumph;
You have the axe, the sickle, the saw and the knife,
don't you?
Brandish them—
When the dust settles all around,
When a thin wall of mist shoots up between faces,
When the road forks out before your eyes and sighs,
When two mountain peaks raise their heads and jostle
When enchantresses wink from every tree top,
Should you worry ?
Should you be conscience-stricken ?
Shame on you, draw out your sword
Of which you are proud.
Blinkers are your forte, my brother ;
Whatever you come across eat it ;
Whatever your eye catches, squeeze it;
Whatever entangles you, slash it.

This helpless
'Mother Earth' lies here exhausted ; her eyes
Are fixed to the skies.

Until the last drop of blood is there
Push your teeth into her limbs and suck.
Isn't there enough flesh ?
At least don't you find her bones, nerves and marrow?
Ah, that's it !
That's manly ! That's brave !

Yonder lies the well of life.
Drain its water to the last drop.
Let the hooked drag thoroughly search the bottom.
Break the atom and achieve your greatness.
Set it against the cosmos itself.
May you succeed !

Be doing something brother,
Don't be idle and be a dead weight upon this earth.
You are destined to reduce the earth's burden.
Your action would be most natural, most needed.

The tree of dead roots

Lift up this tree of dead roots
With all the branches and twigs ;
Prepare coffee with dry leaves, drink it
As sorrow chokes your throat.

Prepare a basin round it and water it.
If grief swells up let your tears
fall here ; inside let satan's food
be cooked, very delicious food.

Beautify the tree with bulbs. Let the lights throw
a rainbow on every branch ;
put paper flowers and garlands
and perfume. Let the bees hum and dance.

Don't blame
The tree as shadowless, the branches as hollow ;
How is shadow better than gold covering ?
This is ages-old tree. For hanging oneself
Is anything better than its branches ?

If the western breeze blows
The tree dances, and echoes it ;
what an imitation dance !

Our divine tree doesn't like the dirty water of this
soil;

It drinks the elixir of dreams.

Does no bird come here ? parrot, parakeet
cuckoo sparrow, crow or owl ?

Kill the cuckoos, stuff them
and keep them in a row on the branches.

Cover the worm eaten bark with goldsheet
And over it inscribe the history of this tree :

" Once it gave shadow, green leaves, sprouts, flowers
fruits.

It had the cuckoo's song, and it was a home of
parrots !

It carried the bow of Arjuna. Here was heard
Krishna's conch, and here his wheel was turning ;
Holymen's wand, vessel and mat were here,
Their leaf huts beautified this place ".

Plant here the flag of "*What was*", my child
"*What is*" shouldn't wring your heart.
The tree is there, covered with gold.
The basin is there, come water it !

The Earth is not Flat

Rivers, tanks and wells,
Downs, valleys and dungheaps—
Like this the earth is not flat.
Ups and downs and stumblings are natural.

The downs get filled by water ; nobody
Desires the toilet water. But
For the everflowing water
Nobody objects.

Well water is drinkable even
If it is filled with mud or covered by algae ;
But however magnificent the ocean looks
You can not drink that water.

When the sun who is the soul of the universe
Begins to play his millions of hands
over the waters,
It's an ecstasy, a quake,
Distintegration of form and metamorphosis.
When any water becomes steam
In its pure state, it rules the sky,
produces electricity and comes down as rain.

Once they reach the sky
All the waters whether of tank or river
Or well or gutter become one.
Tell me where do you find caste ?
Isn't it when you are rooted in the soil ?

A Common Man

How dare you call me Common Man ; Your dad
is common, in the company of my father
your grandfather and your great grandfather
who are dead.

Hey you, tell me if you know my name. Does
your father own
this face, this stance and this lashless
God's-eye mind of mine ? Faraway you sit in your
airconditioned room and conduct
my funeral rites with your generalisations.
If you have any guts, come out
and look at my palm ; look at the
unique mounts, crosses and lines. I will show you
how in this broken lantern the sooty wick
lifts up its burning head.

You are the wooden handle of the axe
which has forgotten the flowering, fruit bearing tree.
For you everything is the same. A group
means a flock, a flock means sheep
and sheep means mutton. Where is the humanity
in you to call each one by name, feed
and fondle it with endearing words ? you know

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All the waters whether of tank or river
Or well or gutter become one.
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and fondle it with endearing words ? you know

only to number us and fill up the trucks by the
meat factory. You know only to apply the
same brand name to all the cans. You dream
of tasting me only from the can.

For a piece of bread, you bastard, you
have allowed them to scrape off your nose and face.
You are the tailless fox for whom variety
is sour. You hold the foot rule and
Scrape off everything until it becomes common.
You, worshipper of the shapeless black money's
jingle, what is the name of the machine
in your chest? Come on, breathe out.

Everything that can breathe has its own history,
its special smile, its own evolution
and direction. It will escape your map
and lift up its flag of individuality
until it can build a tower of light.
I may be an eczema - stricken farmer in torn cloths,
part of a chorus,
or a come-what-may-I-don't-care factory
worker in sooty clothes,
or a limping thrusting-forward begger on the
street.

2

Did you call me a common man? You are mistaken.
Beware, I don't stretch my hands for the handcuffs.
I will bite and tear the noose round my neck

while I close my eyes and muse. Your pistol may
threaten me to march to its tune but I
will be dancing to a different tune in my mind.
I am a free-born soul.

You, worshipper of commonalities who has scraped
off your face to wear the mask of 'Hiranayaksha'

Your only ambition is to stick to your chair,
Therefore either you chisel off the faces of others
or keep them in jails. But look, look! there
the great boar is sharpening his tusks,
waiting for the proper time.

I am the 'Narasimha' caught up in a pillar.

I am also waiting
for a proper time.

All the Waters

1

All the waters to your fields have been stopped.
Grow whatever you please, my friend ;
Art, Freedom, Law, all pile up like cushions for me.
Ah, the great soul of India's culture —
The important thing to bear in mind is
That nobody should chatter, nor wag his tail.
Lifting the eyebrow is a sin
And a sign of a heretic and fascist.
To somersault to the tune has been our distinction
from times of yore.

2

After breaking your backbone I shout on the air ;
The opposition are lispig and trying to stand
vainly on their feet.
Law adding citizens must walk on all fours ;
Then there is less danger of falling;
And falling flat on the ground is least dangerous.

3

Better to fold your tail and listen to the command ;
Be assured of crumbs of bread for your stomach

And plastic jasmines to adorn your hair.
Your applications will all be filed;
And each one will get a grain of cake on
Independence Day :
This is the Way of Surrender to the great Mother,
The mystic self-surrender to the Hallowed Mother.

4

Sticks are better than hands
Swords than sticks
Bow and arrows than swords
Still better are double – barrelled guns ;
But where is the money to buy them ?
Money means power
power means money
If both are there, who cares for the heavens ?
Yet it is dangerous to forget
That right means the left
The left also means the left ;
If you don't agree, O Bastard Book-worm
Better not wag your tail.

5

To stop riots, skirmishes, violence and agitation
The best panacea is yoga.
Yoga experts have been consulted ;
There was a national seminar on
‘Yoga and the Common Man’

And unanimously it was decided
That Shavasana is the best posture.
It is simple, easy and beneficial.
Why wait, go lie down, stretch out your hands and feet.
Relax your nerves,
Take it easy and close your eyes ;
Breathe slowly and meditate on the Mother,
Live as if you are dead ; She likes it best.

The Homeless

The homeless—

Their shelter in the footpaths at night

Their belongings hanging from the branches in the
day ;

At times they appear as if fused by lighting,

Couple in doorways of shops,
on park benches or under them.

They settle only briefly to sprout on deserted plots
full of weeds, thorns and garbage.

Then they are scattered away to nowhere as if by
floods.

the accidental sky

They disperse like meteors.

As though they were their equals they quarrel with dogs
for thrown-away food in the gutters ;

They stand like symbols of rotten, leafless, sun-struck
trees.

Their spirits which should have leaped to the
sky like tongues of fire

Disintegrate and crumble into dust.

Under the weights of their Masters and Lords

They fall to the ground like ashes.

In the dark chambers of factories

Where they become cogs of wheels

Their honest breaths fly away through the chimneys

Adding poison to the air.

Forced to breathe the same

They are incited into rebellion, violence and noise ;

They find their ecstasy in it and are heard no more.

They work hard, becoming manure to a futureless
existence.

Rags, tatters and torn clothes their environment.

And yet,

Carrying load after load of stone, mud and concrete

They give birth to multi-storied skyscrapers.

Look at them.

Have you looked at them ?

Listen now

To the monologue-murmur of your air-conditioner.

The New God-Children

1

The old gods having died the new god children
wail and toil near gutters :
They bend and shrink in the low narrow huts
and crawl over dust, dirt, filth and spit.
They hurry through the streets in between cars, busses,
trucks, autorickshas and legs
becoming tails of rougish ruffian comets.
These million sprouts of light
Languish in the dark shadows terrible time.
They look for left-over food, beedi and cigaratte stubs
in sweepings, dungheaps and ditches.

2

The great ocean churning is on for ambrosia.
Poison-men have become gangsters
and files are full of inhuman records.
Though the sun hasn't risen in the East
in every artificially lighted snake-pit
terrible black cobras are waiting:
Many more raise their heads ready to strike,
in foot-paths, in corners of cinema houses,

amidst crowds of bus stands and parks.
Since Abhimanyu was killed unjustly
distinction between day and night has been lost.
The war is on during the day as it was on
during the night. In the array of hotels, factories,
godowns and fields little ones are caught unawares.
O you darlings, you beat your wings in vain in these
cages.

This is not the country for you.
Procession organisers want people like you
to be their day-time torch-bearers :
They want you to be yes-men
to trail behind them and hail them
and cry victory to them.

These masters expect you to scratch your head
bow and bend before them and cringe for a rupee ;
They provide luxurious conveyance like trucks
for you to greet the gods and goddesses
who return from the dead.

They expect you to be stone-age soldiers
to carry gunny bags of stones
to pelt at street lights and window panes.
You have to keep pace with the police
to squander light.

Young ones,
your hunger has swallowed the intellect,
violence has swallowed your guts,
your throat has unknowingly gulped poison.
O God children, where is the home for you ?

Colleges, schools, playgrounds and gymnasiums
are full of poison-youths and poison-ladies.
They are full of venom from top to toe.
where is that generation
which can the poison in the throat
and carry the pot of ambrosia in their hearts?

We wait like the audience
for the curtain to drop in the last act.
We wait for the divine light that shines in children's
eyes
to engulf and burn the poison into campost.
We wait for shoulder-high crops.

V. G. Bhal

Search for the Soul

I looked for it everywhere
throughout the day ;
I didn't find the soul
which the ancients had propounded.

I looked for it in the temples,
there were only stones ;
on the holy seats of Vedas
there were only Weeds.

I looked for it in children's eyes,
in burial grounds, in the lovely cheeks
of beauties ; I didn't find it.

I looked for it in the depth of tears,
also where the flames were roaring and swaying,
and there,

I didn't find even a fraction of the soul.
Fortunately
nobody laughed at my crazy search !

That evening while I was getting exhausted
I met a man, a holy man ;
I held his hand and told him the story
of my search for the soul
which the ancients had propounded.

The holyman laughed,
" You Wandered in vain ", he said,
" Go home my son
You'll find it where you are."

When I lay my couch
in my pensive mood, because I hadn't found the soul,
I heard someone calling ;
I looked back
and there was none.

Again the call !
I followed the voice to the bookshelf.
And somewhere
from there
came the call "Come my son, Come.
Why do you loiter ?
I'm just here."

Eureka ! Eureka !

The soul smiled at me

from the 153rd page of Kittel Dictionary.

Om ! Shantih, Shantih, Shantihi.

Gangadhara Chittal

My Brother

1

He had contempt for the dim earthen lamp,
He used to say
" To starve the wick
With a miserly flow of oil
All creatures know "

As for as he was concerned
He must be like a torch.
So long as he lives
Must give his life to it
So that it burns bright
Like a blaze of life that dazzles
while it fuses Lives !

He never cared whether
by squandering his energy

He was shortening his life.
Haven't all of us come
To return when we are called ?

2

For some people
This world is a sight to see.
For some it is a well developed breast
which tempts them to hold and suck.
For some it is a stone to be chiselled,
and polished into a statue ;
or it is only clay that has to be
Fashioned into an idol.

But for my Brother
This world was his family,
Everyone was his friend or companion,
Ever growing sense of kniship
was his only care :

Therefore
he would call all the peopl
To assemble. He would appeal to them
And enthuse them for
constructive plans.

In destroying obstacles and in creating facilities
He used to feel elated.
Though his ailing body was like a brake to his work
He went wherever he was needed !

Whisperers whispered :

" He has no time for his own children

But wants to improve the world.

Though the apprentice under him

Has a multistoried building

This fellow lives in a rented house.

Though the fat he gathered

Is dwindling

He burns the candle at both ends !

Why can't he keep quiet ?

Why should he carry all kinds of burden

When he doesn't earn even a paisa ? "

How could this adventurous soul

Think like the worldly wise ?

As long as he breathed, how could he give up

The congenital craving for company ?

3

I came running and rushed to his room.

I called him " Brother! "

He didn't even bat his eyelid.

The body was lying on its back.

He was wheezing. The eyes were sightless.

The stiffened limbs had lost their warmth.

The bellow of breath was still working

The last gasps.

Suddenly aware of his death

I felt a chill along my spine.

I was sure he was no more.
He who always hurried like a youth,
He who befriended even strangers,
The innocent who was chasing dreams,
The perennial friend was no more.

He who cared not body's fatigue,
He who fountained enthusiasm for life,
He had crossed the border of light ;
 never to come back !

We carried the corpse of him
who had walked in and out
only two days ago.

After cremating him
We came back bare-headed, empty-handed.
Entering his room which was empty,
We couldn't control our sorrow,
We burst into tears.

4

Even after he joined the four elements
His name was on our tongues.
The sweetness of his affection
lingered in our hearts.
In the shining eyes of children,
In their smiles that bloom,
In their innocent talk
We saw his shape was peeping.

He held up the bright torch
until his hand dropped from strain ;
He fought bravely against darkness !

In the last few days
He had no time at all for rest—
The only question that haunts me is,
Had he seen the shadow nearing him ?
Had he lost courage thinking
That he had to traverse all the way all alone ?

B. C. Ramachandra Sharma

The Seven-walled fort

Once upon a time
A demon carried away a princess
And kept her in the cellar
Of a heavily gaurded seven-walled fort.

To save her honour the lovely princess
Thought of poison, drowning, fire or dagger
She hoped for the prince
To break through the walls
And carry her away, after killing the demon.

And the prince came
Like the incarnation of her dreams
And told her ;
"Darling I have come
And I have killed the demon."

And they lived happily ever after !
Such was the granny's tale
And into this world a child came.

2

Did the child come
Or was it there already with me?
Did it spring up
Like a memory hidden in the unconscious?
Once the child came
I became conscious of its sweet face and lovely body
And its importunate eyes :
" I have come trusting you
Just give me room to stay ".

3

In the company of the pleasant child
How the days passed.
And months and years,
I hardly noticed.
My heart was full.
The day I was eighteen, he too was eighteen.
I wore the glasses he gave me
And it was a feast
To watch the beauty of the earth.
The coquetish bee before hiding himself inside the
lotus
Turned to me and winked at me.

The creeper that had enslaved the mango tree
Teased me with a flowering smile.
On the well developed breasts of mountains
The evening Sun moved his fingers !
Over the green grass, under the cover of moonlight
I noticed a girl was giggling !
And I remembered the princess
Who was kept in the cellar
of a heavily gaurded seven-walled fort.
I heard her cry and rushed forth
And killed the demon,
And spoke to her
" I am the prince O Darling
Why do you think of suicide ? "

4

Now I am an old man. .
Is it not years ago he who came as a child
And stood as high as the sky
Went away the way he came ?
Watching shadow after shadow before the night arrives
The heart remembers sweetness and sorrow.
Like memoring stands the mountain range at a
distance ;
Even if the details are hidden
The outline is distinct.

My grand child
Sits on my lap and asks me to tell him a story.

" Listen my child.
Once upon a time
A demon carried away a princess
And imprisoned her in the cellar
of a heavily gaurded seven walled fort. "

Pand uand Madri

O sky ready to pounce on the Earth's body
O river caught between the tightening banks
O evening dressed in fog beyond the river
O trees and hills hazy in the horizon,
If it is pushed down the question pops up like a cork:
Is life significant if the personal merges with the
impersonal?
Is the end of search a gaping void ?

To lose their names, the river to the sea and flesh to
darkness rush.

Is it the final goal ?
Between amnesia and amnesia a moment's flash is
life....

* * * *

As pandu walked to the distant hut
His eyes stumbled. He stopped and gazed
At the lips, breasts and the navel of a woman.

As if the inundating river had smashed him
His heart staggered.
He knew the spider waited for its prey,
And he touched the gossamer thread.

The curse of the antelope killed in mating
Blazed up and burnt her dream.
Before she pushed him
She knew his eyes.

But the circle was complete
Before the sudden cry leaped to the sky
And scared the evening.

Metamorphosis

As if from a black rug
Someone tore off the shreds
And gave them life,
One after another the caterpillars crawled
Like an army marching for an attack.

I wondered why one of them
Broke away from the line
And reached my room
And occupied a window corner.
As if it was a spy on a risky job
It chose a dark spot and pitched its tent.

Though daylight brightened the room
It didn't move,
As if it was committing Harakiri.
Why was it eager to die?
May be it was a not a caterpillar
But a Rishi who had chosen to die
When it pleased him.

Gradually its thorny hair fell off
Completely. First it looked grey,

Slowly it turned green and a little blue
Joined it to make it look
Like a piece of copper sulphate.

Although it looked like an encased corpse
Or like a Rishi in penance
Whenever an ant touched it,
It seemed to feel it
Throughout the body.

It was not an act of death,
It was a case of rebirth—
As if an embryo was stretching its legs
It was an unknown poem
In the unconscious.

One fine morning when the sunlight was young
The worm seemed excited for a second coming.
In a moment there was a hole in the covering.
As the antennae were feeling the air
The worm crawled to the hole.
It slipped once, got scared and sat still.

No, it tore off the case, beat its wings
And rose high
Like a butterfly.
Words had found a newbirth in a poem,
As if Aphrodite had returned.

The Mule

On a sofa or on a couch
Pressing my knees to the chest
When I curl up I grumble,
Memory is a mule.
To climb the hills and mountains
Of Ethiopia a mule is essential.

When the sailor's itch jumps to the shore,
When in one month the clouds empty
Twelve month's rain,
When in secret beds
The river plays its shining finger,
When Muscaram makes the priests
Dance under colourful umbrellas,

Then,
Flowers drop their gold on the slopes of mountains.
At night, after an adulterous excitement is over,
To return home,
A firm-footed mule is essential.
Here in London
There are no mountains.
Though there are plenty of busses and trains
The tongue strikes at the toothless gap.

The American Tourist

It was idiotic of me to think that you are a salmon
Returning to its place of birth, to breed. You didn't
lay eggs.

You boarded the Plane in New York and
got down here
With a desire to conceive. Days passed quickly.

The way of the fish is different. It just bends its body
And effortlessly dives down. Its life passes without
much hubbub

Under the water. It can only see things at a small
distance.

When it comes up any net might catch it.

You are not a fish. You just want to search your
place of birth.
But for the fish the everflowing water itself means life.

G. S. Shivaradrappa

This Sunday

This sunday -

The everflowing river has stopped
Forming itself into a lake
Reflecting my trees, plants and creepers
Giving me a sort of comfort.

There's no hurry.
I may give an extension
To my early morning sleep
And let the sprouting beard
Sprout for some more time.
At least today lying on my bed
I can be myself without being bothered
By hurrying steps, growing ques,
Rolling wheels, telephone calls, and office flies.

Fortunately I have not reserved a ticket
For the next wrold
Considering this one a waiting room.
I don't have to bribe any God to save me.

Fortunately,
I have travelled many roads
And I have replaced many tyres.
Atleast today
I will get the car overhauled.

Look,
How fine it is beyond the window !
A thin cloud floats in the sky.
Yonder there is a hill,
And over the hill a lonely unkempt tree.
Everything looks as if it is enjoying a holiday.

Perhaps the saints and holy men,
Might have stretched a minute like this
Into eternity.
In a way, this minute
I am also a saint
of a slightly lower order !

My Lamp

I will light a lamp
Not with certainty that I will conquer darkness ;
While countless ships of light have been drowned
I don't dream that my lamp will lost forever.

I will light a lamp
Not with the hope that I will crossover darkness,
Because I know for centuries
Footsteps have huffed from darkness to darkness ;
Now and then we have struck matches,
we have lighted the torches of vedas, puranas,
Histories, Science and poetry.
"Take us from Darkness to Light" has been our prayer,
But all that we have seen is heaps of ash.

I also know that this darkness
Has unquenchable thirst.
It may wear or wrap or eat or drink only light ;
But its craving is enormous.

Still I will light a lap
Not with certainty that I will crossover darkness
But with the hope

That as long as we are here
we may see each other's face.

Who knows what we may mean to each other
when the lamp goes out
And darkness rules.

The Child Crossed the Threshold

The Child crossed the threshold.
Leaving behind the vast plains of the drawing room,
He crossed the threshold mountain range
Which had formed a fort wall
Between the verandah and the inner world !
There, on the highest peak of the Himalayas
Tensing had scored a victory ;
Here there was a greater joy and a feast.
We offered coconuts to the Gods
And sweets to our friends and neighbours.

What emerged slowly from the dark womb was
only water.
Out of the water came the plants and the birds,
And the beasts, and finally a Homo Sapien.
The child crossing the threshold is a gilded page ;
He turned a new leaf ! Oh ! it is a conquest,
praise him !

To My Great Great Grandson

I cannot imagine you, nor can you imagine me,
There are dark roaring waves rolling between us.

One day you will tread the land which I have tread,
You will go for a walk with your dad.
Suddenly you may pause and ask him,
How your great great grand father had lived.

Poor man, your father might give a puzzled look
And tell you "Son; I didn't know much.
But this is what I know, they came from somewhere,
And when grandpapa said this, I was still a boy".

Now, you see that old heavy box,
It belonged to your grandfather and
So also that old gun was his father's,
It seems he was a great fighter,
He may say something like this to evade your
question.

While you walk thus under the evening sky
Earth and Sky will whisper smiling at both of you.
The wind will blow scattering the clouds, and
The evening train will carry the day's goods.

At the edge of the dark precipice of night
While you stand dumb and listen
To the murmur of waters in the unknown depths,
You may just sigh deeply.

I am anxious what memory I should leave
Behind me, for your sake.

Between you and me

Between you and me are always present
Ceaseless rain and howling wind,
Scorching sun and burning couch,
Falling leaves and blazing pyres,
Shadow of vultures and barking hounds.

Between us they register their presence everyday,
Funeral experts who keep their vigil;
If they find even a small mistake, they will blow it up
To scrap our life and roast us alive.

If we stand up, the world licks our feet
But if we fall it tramples us into bloody mess.
He who rises climbs the throne and rules,
The quiet one is simply dubbed an ass.
What else remains except the trumpet for the
Victorious.

.It's the procession of these people and their commotion

That lasts between us. I am sick of these gods
Who wait to bless us if we prostrate. Come let us go
To a distant shore where the lamps of the festival
Burn quietly without a blinding glare.

Modest Hope

When I say I don't like to hide anything
Don't think that I will stand naked.
I dislike those who insult the life of common man
With tall-talk

I am not used to change
The size and shape of my head
To fit the dangling crowns.

My share of the earth I will plough
To sow the seeds and water them,
To open the eyes of sleeping seeds.

I don't dream that all the seeds
will sprout and grow into gigantic trees
That will provide shelter to thousands;
But I have the modest hope to see
Alleast one or two of them to grow
And yield fruits that will have healthy seeds.

In the Darkness of the Jungle

In the darkness of the jungle
When the evening was melting
A little boy sat under a tree.

Around him the dense forest;
Every tree was droning with forest flies,
Every rainfilled puddle was croaking with frogs,
Peaks of mountains scarred the sky.

I asked the boy who was a shadow
Under the shadow of the tree,
“Why are you here ?”

Frightened he stood up, lean-legged,
Pale-faced, with torn clothes, unkempt hair,
And scared look.

He said as he cried:

“The cattle have not returned. At home
the master will whip me.....Therefore”

Around him the thick forest,
But he is not afraid of that;
He is afraid of the cattle going astray

And the whippings he is sure to receive.
He sits in silence.

It is not his mistake the cattle strayed:
Still he cannot go back without the cattle.
If he goes back he is sure to be whipped.

Because of that
Darkness will not stop descending
over the thick forest.
The croaking of frogs, the twinkling of glow-worms,
Nothing a will stop

Somewhere within the darkness,
Stretching his burning eyes
Into the thick forest,
The Master is waiting
With a whip in his hand
Tearing the skin of the lean-legged,
Pale-faced, milk-eyed boy.

Somewhere a Child is Crying

Like a subterranean river of fire,
Like ceaseless rain from the clouds above,
Like waves that strike against the shore,
Somewhere a child is crying -

The moon is a piece of bread
Unapproachable in the plate of the sky,
The stars burn like sparks of hunger
In the entrails of the void,
Like the belches of a well fed man
The city lights dazzle,
And leafless trees with out-stretched hands
Are shivering around in the cold.

Somewhere a child is crying -
Thousands of feet trample continuously
The helpless road,
Daily business runs on endless rails,
Somehow silently the days pass
In every humble home.

The cry has mixed with incense
And sound of bells from churches and temples.
The cry is entangled in the spider web of politics

Which has spread through out city forests
To the height of skyscrapers.
Somewhere a child is crying —

Like the accumulated agonies of ages,
Like the sighs of burnt out dreams in heaps of ashes,
Like the tottering virtues in the midst of corruption,
Like the will of innocents which cannot change the
world,
Somewhere a child is crying.

Your Smile

Your smile beautifies the morning sky.
It descends as a sun's ray
Through the thick forest
To play upon the waves of the lake.
It opens the eyes of buds,
It wakes up birds asleep in the cradle of trees,
It becomes the gold on mountain tops.

Your smile
Sows wonders in the milky eyes of children,
It pushes the udders up
To become the animation of sucklings,
It goes along the babbling rivers
Until it lashes against the shores.
Spreading its wings
It plays all over the cocoanut beech.

Your smile
Becomes the magnet of young girl's cheeks,
It forms rainbows in the hearts of youths,
It casts shadows of clouds
On the evening faces of old men,
It swings over the fires of burning pyres.

SRI JAGADGURU VISHWARADHYA 101
JNANA SIMHASAN JNANAMANDIR

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Your smile

Records memories over the evening sky,

It burns as lamp in the dusk of homes,

It lingers over dark seas

Spreading the net of stars.

Channaveera Kanavi

My Faith

During winter when the tree became bare leaf by leaf
And through unseen roots
Was gathering the essence
Who was it that sprang up?
After the storm threw up confusion
And pushed open the doors and windows,
When raindrops pattered on the roof
Who was it that descended to the earth?
Next day all along the fence
When flowers bloomed
Who was it that chuckled and went away?

* * * *

Suddenly at some moments something speaks
Within us. The fountain that spouted from the top
rock

Of the mountain takes its own course.
While day and night slip away
They suck our sap, and then will say :
“ We have hidden the nectar from you,
You seek it out. ” Even if a full pitcher
Of nectar lies before us and surprises us
We must not hurry. It is not water
To quench our thirst nor wine to intoxicate us.
We have to take it drop by drop on our palm,
And lick it to fill our tongue with taste.

* * * *

My belief is a sky,
Yes ; it is baseless.
However much I grow I don't grasp it.
I have experienced it only from a distance.
Even if I walk without looking up
It is above me.
Daytime I don't pay attention to it,
Because it is enough if we are immersed in life.
When at night the electricity fails
And we light candles,
When we are scared or when sit yawning
There is no count of the shining stars in the sky.

* * * *

A Sparrow

Behind the painting hung on the wall
A Sparrow builds a nest,
And makes it soft
With pieces of cotton, grass and twine.
This timid creature
Has two little wings of confidence.

She comes into the kitchen
For grains of rice
And flies out of the window
To gather worms and insects.

(This vegetarian)
Comes back again in haste
And rushes out again.
On her way back, she perches
On the window bar
And watches, as she turns her head
Right and left.
She dashes in again to the baby bird
Who is crying out his hunger.
How can I keep count
Of her coming in or going out ?

As I keep on watching her
The little form of the sparrow disappears
Leaving me contemplate
The eternal springs of Love.

Shanker Mokashi Punekar

**Three Faces of the Elusive
Mother**

O Mother, our great Mother
You are three mothers in one
(Foster mother, Adopted mother and Real mother.)

At first you appear as the foster mother
And you win my heart as you nourish me.
Leaving your pendant roots in my guts
You claim the whole earth to be entirely yours.
The fresh red tips of roots might fade at a touch
But each one holds up a crooked branch.
Those who eat from your affectionate hand
Have lost the strength of their fore arms.
Will you make me blind by becoming my eye-ball?
Will you make me a stunted plant by covering me
with your shadow?

Next you enter as the adopted mother
Hanging in my presence, duties writ large :
Ambition, ego, duty, hardwork.
Ideals, eagerness, initiative and grit.
You want us to be like chanakya and chandragupta
And your love is like vidula's love for her son.
At every step you want me to be competitive
ambitious and spirited,
The interest you demand is more than the Capital.
When I am sitting you twist my ear and
make me stand up,
And you want me account every paisa I spent.
You go on commanding', "charge ahead"
I would consider myself fortune
if I have strength to walk.
You come in the last minute as my real mother
Like a barking dog of my previous dreams.
When my sickness and disturbed state
Seem to tease the three paths of the sky
The winners of Death have run from the battle
And they have begged the lost minute to return.
Will we win or lose is the question of my nerves
And the muscles are tense.
The strength was in the arms, but it is not there in
my guts.
What strength the bow had, the arms did not have :
Coward flesh had contempt for the mental prompting
And the ladder leaning against the clouds
had broken down.

Can the eyes understand the net that affection casts?
How can we transcend the limits set by the womb?

He who understands the gist of this song
Will search out the fourth face of the mother.

A. K. Ramanujan

An Inchworm's Transmigration

In a story I heard in America
once upon a time
a sparrow was looking somewhere,
and chanced to see an inchworm ;
an inchworm—
greenbodied
red-mouthed like a ruby,
dragging his body
arching his back
crawling step by step, each step as long as his body
measuring the earth inch by inch by inch
noiseless unknown nameless
crawling creature
the inchworm.

The sparrow looked at him ;
he was hungry and he was about to gobble the worm.
Then the worm
requested, " Don't eat me-
I'am an inchworm very useful ;
I measure the world."

" Is that so ? Then
measure
my tail," said the sparrow and lifted his tail.
" Certainly," said the worm, " look here
One two three four five,
five inches is the length of your tail."

" Wonderful ! I never knew it
My tail
is five inches ! FIVE, not one, not two
not three, not four, but FIVE ! "
And the sparrow, you know what he did,
he lifted the worm and carried him
on his back to other birds.

They had so much to be measured.
Then started the measuring
Career of the worm ;

He measured the swan's neck
He measured the quill of the Japanese duck
He measured the lifted leg of the
American crane.

When some orange coloured bird ordered,
 "Measure my
 tongue,"

He got scared and cursed silently,
swallowed his anger, sweated profusely
and starting from the throat
measured hurriedly to the tip of the tongue
inch by inch by inch
and breathed a sigh of relief.

 In this way he measured
 the beak of the pelican,
 the tail of the peacock,
 the crown of the woodpecker,
 the feather-worn belly of the old owl,
 the quills of many nameless birds,
 foreign birds which are named only in books,
 their chest, face
 and their sexual organs
 which no one has seen,
 he entered
 and transmigrated—
measured endlessly
added and subtracted
and he got tired
poor eunuch worm.

 One day
A cuckoo came there.

"Hey, how long is
my song? Measure it" he said,
And the inchworm was shocked
and he pleaded
"I will measure your tail
your nose, your mouth,
hands or feet
anything you mention.

You need have no reservation with me,
show me anything and I'll measure it.
But your song? It can't be measured."

"Will you measure it or shall I Swallow you,
you rascal?" threatened the cuckoo.
"please don't be angry, alright, I'll measure it
you go on singing," said the inchworm.

The cuckoo hawed
and hemmed and cleared his throat.
raised his voice sky high
and sang in a high pitch.

The cuckoo sang and the inchworm measured
inch by inch by inch
pressing his face and lifting his body,
going up and going down
appearing, disappearing, pressing and lifting
circling and curling, falling and balancing
inch by inch by inch.

Measuring day and night
in the forest full of trees and plants
before the song ended quietly disappeared
without a name and without a trace.

If you want that Bird

You know

**there was a king in Mangolia
and he went to conquer some distant country.
heard a strange bird singing
and wanted the Song
and he wanted the bird for his song
and the nest for the bird
the twig for the nest
the branch for the twig
the tree for the branch
the roots
the surrounding lumps of earth
the town
the water
the whole land
the whole kingdom
everything he wanted to carry with him.**

So

**he gathered all his strength
his elephants, horses, chariots and his army
and conquered the land
and didn't go home**

When a Wiseman Dreams

Long ago in china
everynight
a wiseman dreamed.

Everynight
he was a lemon-coloured butterfly
flying from
waterlily to marigold
and marigold to waterlily.

That was the dream.
Since for many nights
he was a butterfly,
he was caught in the illusion
wondering whether
he was a man or a butterfly,
whether the butterfly of the night
was a dream of the day-man
or
the day a dream of the night.

Arvind Nadkarni

Looking at East

Whether it was accidental love or the result of
imitation

We had a foolish necessity ;
We roamed the fields to collect all kinds of flowers
To offer to household diety.

Smearred with sacred ash over the arms and over the
navel

When the bells would toll
We anxiously waited for Lord Vishnu to come down
From the wooden frame hung on the wall.

From every room Gods came out in palanquins
To receive coconut and plantain;
The rooms were packed with devotees
We couldn't distribute the oblation.

Madcaps, don't laugh. That's a great sin. God can,
see

Even when his eyes are closed.

He can pick up hidden things from every corner of
the mind;

To hell, you will be chased.

Who is he? what's his name? What is his parentage?
Such questions did not bother us.

When the mind was lost in awe-inspiring miracles
Scientific attitude was treacherous.

* * * *

Looking at East has become a habit, Garrulously
I call it a child's play.

Without subjecting Gods to rational touch-stones
I have lost my way.

I came behind the mythical cow, Nandini
Which entered the Lion's den.

How can I rescue the gentle cow?

How can I beard the Lion?

H. M. Channaih

Lunar Eclipse

On the day of complete Lunar Eclipse
The telescope must have turned toward the moon
And he may remember the stolen sweet embrace
And the shameless rehearsal and the uninhibited talk
And our fear that your husband might come back.
Looking at all this, the earth
Who threw mud into the eye of the moon
Must have giggled.

When it was past midnight, the dog barked
At the moon and the cat dropped a cup
In the Kitchen. "It's late, he may come,
I'll go now" I said.
Mischievous stars laughed on your teats
And the moon guffawed on your sacred necklace
And the wind beat a stealthy retreat.

The moon saw the husband coming out
of the tank, shivering and muttering
The mantras which would pave the way
To his heaven. As he came down
The hips of the mountain, the eclipse-free moon
Smiled on the pure water of the tank.
The husband went on muttering the mantras—
God Shiva must have blessed him from the Himalayas.

I became a child again when I pressed
My lips to your breast, and played in the slope of your
Thighs. You said you loved me and I said the same
thing.

By then it was six in the morning.

Bells were heard in the temple signifying
Purification after the eclipse. The sun arose
Opening the red thighs of the sky and the earth
While our souls slowly loosened the embrace.

Bourgeois

With well-combed hair
And clean shaven shining cheeks,
With his gait that wouldn't spoil the ironed suit,
Whenever I meet him
I feel sick
As I feel sick in a speeding bus.

When he drops ash from his cigar
He holds it like a magic wand;
And drops words which crawl like cockroaches.
Plucking their antennae,
Pulling their legs one by one,
Pricking a needle into them,
And crushing them;
I feel sick when their blood sticks to my fingers,
And I want to runaway from him.

To escape from him
I run into lanes,
But he is sure to catch me :
May be in an office or a cafe or a talkies
Suddenly he will present himself.

This morning while standing before a mirror
I thought of pulling out his cigar from his mouth.
I wanted to tie him up and castrate him—

While combing my hair
When I looked into the mirror
I saw his face instead of mine
And I got scared.

I am terribly Puzzled.

Sumalheendra Nadiq

Winter

He feels, She is the means for him
to grasp reality, a witness for his life.
a mirroring magic that sucks his sap
and transforms it to the secret miracle of life,
She is the earth that sustains his roots.

Like him she too is of the moment,
of sweat and mucus, an earthly withering flower.
He too, like her is the rain that is seen
dripping from caves and forming bubbles on the
ground.

the pitter-pattering sound, the howling windy
torrential rain and the dazzling, blinding, lightning.

She has passions too as he has ; instincts
for food, sleep, fear and sex. She too
is susceptible to the nose-blocked moods,
ember-like burning fever, heart-aches and gut
responses.

More than him she is likely to be drawn to the threshold of death, even before her final breath. She knows the calamitous brink of happiness.

II

She feels that he has made her an object of pleasure. It is easy for him to forget that she is a sentient creature. His thick skin doesn't register the resultant pain. He senses only the lack of attention and service.

What he needs is softness, smoothness and warmth. He has itchy lips and tongue, the desire to empty her lungs, ambition to conquer and plant his flag of virility. This is not the loom of life where the warp of the soul enters the woof of the body. He denies her individuality under the pressures of culture.

She feels that her fleshy legs must become sharp like scissors to crack him. His neurotic personality becoming pegs turn at the end of her nerves stretching them to the breaking point. The pitch rises, melody changes to malady, history into hysteria. The chords might break any minute.

III

In some close corner of his brain or in his heart
somewhere his sun is blocked in his clotted blood.
Through his eyes, tongue, breath, touch and listening
the sun does not give out the warmth of his rays.

She can't believe in a day without the sun.
Every aeon a sun dies, and another is born.

The Python

The Ghoorka taps upon the steps
with his stick

Beside the fence a Python-creeper which winds itself
around a Jack tree, crushing the nest of a bird where
the tree branches out,
comes down

to undress me with its CROOKED teeth and twist
around me fast.

(The Snake-cold body has a burning hold).

Twining, tightening, rolling on
The ground, it licks me
tired and recedes to the tree.

Yesterday in my dream

I watched the Python slowly swallowing
my sister, inch by inch. I begged, threatened
and at last thrust a knife in the corner of its mouth,
ripped the python and had her out.

After the slimy body was washed
She came to her senses
Smiling, my sister!

A Sonnet to my Cat

When I call you, you new back
From where you are, condescendingly :
You will not stoop to come down
To respond to my need of a friend.

When you are hungry, lifting your tail,
Brushing your fur against my legs
You walk in between and around my legs
Mewing out your importunate request.

Climbing into my lap you purr,
And snarl if you are brushed aside ;
You will scratch me and go away in displeasure.

If the pet parrot perchance is out
You will wring her neck and mutter feline,
"Who cares for her? A parrot is as good for me as
a rat".

Your Wealth

Each curl a noose.
Intestines are serpentine passages ;
Tongue is a sharpener of daggers
And eyes are automatic guns.
Your teeth are the disciples of crocodiles
And skin is the pall of orphan babes.

Husbands sick of their wives
Might fling their lives away
From your sky-high boobs ;
Your marrow may be good for the necromancer's fires,
And breath is a boon to the capitalists
To blow away slums.

Witches know the secret of drying up milching cows,
Enough if they touch the udders
With your poisonous blood.

This is the wealth that has turned your head,
Keep it to yourself, I have others instead.

What an Old Man told me in Philadelphia

We love children, our grand children
May or may not come to see us.
Once or twice a year
They will speak to us on the phone
Or send us cards on the Grand father's day
Or on the Grandmother's day or greet us before
Christmas.

This is no country for old men
Where we are not even living memories ;
We are living corpses,, interesting only
For studies in geriatrics or
Sociological studies in ageing.

We have dreamt of golden countries
Where it is not crime to be old.
The young in one another's arms
Will have their adventure and fun ;
But the lisping, babbling children
Not caged in cribs or rooms
Nor ill-treated by baby-sitters,
With glazing innocence in their eyes

Their world uncontaminated by the ideas of decay and
death,

Play around their grand parents.

In their mirth they do not keep away
Their grand parents as corpses
But will touch them, kiss them and ask
Intriguing questions, pester them to tell them
Marvellous stories and make the old forget their
loneliness.

“You are as young as you feel”

The old are told by ads—

But if you are in old men's homes

How can you feel young with wrinkles,

Arthrities, diabetes, myopia and pain in every joint?

We do not feel mellow,

But we feel hollow and morbid. We feel

Depressed by looking at depressed faces.

We are sick of wheel chairs

And sick of each other's old jokes.

Starved for love, we are full of hatred.

The only other feeling is dread.

In this Country of perpetual adolescence

We know that decay cannot be stopped,

We know that dwindling energy cannot be stopped,

We know that pursuit of happiness is a romantic
myth.

We also know
That our loneliness can be reduced
If only there is life around us.
If only there is the laughter of little children.

Between Us

Between flower and flower
the bee is a pimp.
We don't need middle men
nor winds
to carry our seeds.

Between us
Power, Jealousy and Pride raise their heads,
and then, sneak in
a Zeus, an Iago or a Paris;
we feel our cot stands on three legs.

I felt like a rock, I thought you a flower;
Together we were like an oyster.
Some sand particle entered the shell
and the effort to bear the pain
became a pearl;
Such was the time.

Such was the time, when
you who laughed like a flower, became a fruit.
As the Seed enlarged, you bulged in the middle
and shuddered suddenly
when I thought you would beam.

I too shuddered :
Is she a Caesar's mother ?
What if she will die ?
Why am I male, a sorrowful tale ?
I thought of the rock that has reached the top,
now it must surely come down.

Thank God, you became a mother, again a flower,
Your smile had returned fresh as ever,
as if the rock had finally reached,
as if Eurydice had returned.

Gorgon

When with warmth I hold you
You change to a marble Snake.
The water I swim, turns to ice.
Before our marriage, you were
A bunch of grapes. Did my tongue
Water to snatch you from your mother
And from a dear departed father ?

As if a lion held an orphan
You get terrified and turn aside.
If your curls are fingered, you
Curl up like a worm. You my darling
Touch-me-not, my virgin, my child,
At last you win finding a father in me
And oozing motherliness in my breast.

May be in the maternity home, they cut you
And packed you up like meat.
You see their inhumanity in me
And turn to a log. My dreams are
Full of eating. How irritated you are, how sick,
How sour, who was before the wedding a ripe
delicious mango !

Tell me if I am mistaken. If you
Had known yourself, you wouldn't have
Disguised thus. You became a peeler, a knife,
You became my wife to end my life.
Your tufts of hair are snakes, and to your look
I am stone. Tell me my darling Gorgon,
The vengeance of how many births
Is our home, sweet home?

Around the Rose Garden

Around the rose garden
the cobra throws its shadow
and the frightened calf pulls at the tether ;
often the young bull brings the fence down
and tears the mud with its bellow.

The seed of consciousness sprouts,
puts up shoots and grows into a sappling,
grows into a flowering tree,
then it bears the fruits.
When the leaves fall, new leaves come
and spring squanders his splendour.
Youth throws off the curtain
to unveil the miracle of life.
Night groans and turns aside.

The horn of life sounds
while lovers whisper in darkness,
and drums thunder accelerating the heartbeat,
Everyday the sun rises and sets
day follows night.

Eyes

These eyes
neither look in nor look out
but they're in search of mirrors
to look at themselves.

All the mirrors in the world

can not please them.

They are unhappy that everything and everybody is
not a mirror.

These eyes curse eyelashes as hindrances,
they curse darkness and the sun.

They grumble that they have a small place.

Jealous of other senses, particularly of the nose,
they dirty it with tears.

They are angry even with skin and bones
for fixing them in their place.

Unaware that their own anxiety,
will be their death,

they look for mirrors and mirrors and mirrors.

K. S. Nisar Ahmed

America, O America

America, O America

Whenever your culture is held sky high

I feel like stripping your ties, suits and shirts

And I want to shame you by documenting

Your Spanish-German-Portuguese-English-Negro

Pirates, murderers and adulteresses,

And laugh villainously.

But then

Before me appear the faces of Lincoln, Kennedy and
King

And I falter, I fold my hands and grow pale.

Under the silly pretext of wiping out the communists
and the Nazis

Through Life and Time magazines

When you masturbate, I feel sick of you and drink
Vodka
And chat with Castro, De Gaulle, Ho Chi Minh and
Nasser.
Then pierces the memory of Chinese and Pakistan
invasions,
And your friendly assuring hand stretching across
Six thousand miles.
When you fly the flag of decency on the Empire State
building
I want to howl to the world
How sick you are with you nightclubs,
Your restless females,
007s, Hollywood, Beats, Twists and Can-Cans,
Your psychic acrobats, Hashish, Marijuvana,
L. S. D. and F. L.-
I want to howl to the world exposing
Your back masses, secret meetings, your twenty-a-
minute divorces
I want the Statue of Liberty which faces the world
But whose back is turned to you
To turn back and look into your ugly slums
And the Harlems of your heart—
I want to cast off the tommyguns
Which you give as birthday gifts to your Children,
And instead,
I want to present the Bible, the Geetha and the Kora
I want your pale faces

To have the glow of oriental sages.
I want to iron out the wrinkles on Johnson's forehead.
And press upon his lips Nehru's rosy smile.

America, O America
Whenever you boast of your strength in Vietnam
The nationalist forces wipe you out like bugs ;
When I see you sabotaging young governments
And supporting puppets through the C. I. A.
When I see your rockets that rise and lick the dust ;
When I see your ladders to the moon
I want to stop your lunacy
And immediately I remember your wheat loans,
Your P. L. 480 and I am speechless.

When I see that you are peerless
I think of the fallen elephant
Which is as big as a living horse
And I salute you.
Quietly through thousand mediums
As you destroy my individuality
I abuse you, jealous of your progress.
But my utter poverty, my overwhelming population,
And want of living space
Hold my tongue
and ask me to be patient.

At Mysore Zoo

At Mysore Zoo there is also a museum
Where the forms of dead animals
Have been preserved as specimen.

Four giraffes which two years ago
Had freely walked in a quarter acre of prison land
Succumbed to a strange viral disease.
Now helplessly they parade their long necks
From the museum hall
For visitors who come during the day.

An year ago an angry chimpanzee
Who had bitten off the three fingers
Of the old sweeper and who
In the presence of visitors
Had danced wildly around the three fingers,
Has now become an object in the museum.
Her young ones are orphans.

The same old sweeper points out
That chimpanzee to the visitors,
And tries to make the old incident more spicy
So that he will be admired as a hero.

After listening to him
Instead of sympathising with his anger and pain
We start admiring the monkey.

In the museum which is inside the Zoo
A mongoose faces a cobra,
A leopard faces a deer
As if they are posing for a cinema still.
Though there is a sign board
Forbidding touching these specimens,
An year old child touches them.

With their curiosity to behold a variety
of foreign animals
A number of visitors
Forget the very existance of the museum—
Therefore they ignore the past.

Among all the specimens that
Caught my attention for a long time
There is the stuffed skunk from our own forest.
Once upon a time, though the visitors
Provoked him by throwing mud,
He had never shown his teeth and all the time
He had stuck to a corner like a lazy bum.
While all the other jackals of different breed
used to walk from one end to the other
This fellow used to knock off their food cleverly.
Though he had grown fat

Always he wore a sad expression of hunger.
Thus our intellectual skunk had wasted his life.
When tigers, lions and even crows
-because of late meal or teasing visitors-
Became unruly,
This gutless looking skunk was silent—
He sits in the same posture, even today.

In this manner the present lives with the past
In an unnatural embrace
Hinting at the future—
This has given the Zoo its character.

After seeing all this when I come out
I get stupified without understanding
Whether the museum is part of the Zoo
Or the Zoo is an extension of the museum.
As life exists amidst death
The museum exists inside the Zoo.

The Pursuer

Darling,
The way of withdrawing a heart
Is not like releasing pawned article.
It's not like, after an agreed term,
Giving up lease of a land.
Even if you drive away the coloniser
His impression and tradition are indelible.
How can you get rid of me
As easily as you would wash away
The Scent from your Kerchief?
Wait for the way I'll haunt you
 like a ghost always in embrace
And marvel at my vengeance.

In the afternoon at three
When you knit a sweater or a sock,
Or When you lie in boredom
And count the stains on the ceiling,
When you switch on the radio and listen to my sounds,
And your eyes turn to silver,
And something turns in you
Like a silkworm in the cocoon

Wait for the way I'll haunt you
like a ghost always in embrace
And marvel at my vengeance.

On the city bus when a youth in a suit
Observes stealthily your breasts
And you cover them with the border of your saree,
When your curls play with the breeze
And your right hand encircles your husband
And the two of you are watching the sky,
When the sky is frighteningly empty
Like the X-ray film of my heavily smoked lungs,
(Of course a result of thinking of you.)
When, as if watching an unfocussed movie
Your eyes are dim and your head is reeling,
Wait for the way I'll haunt you
like a ghost always in embrace
And marvel at my vengeance.

When distinctions like hands and legs and lips
disappear,
When under the downy warmth
Souls are swinging,
When he who babbles "My sweetheart"
Is playing with your ruffled hair,
When all at once familiar eyes
Meet with a hundred volts,
When the runaway merges with the chaser,
When the two release their embrace and collapse

Like a cock with the severed head,
When he would be heavily breathing
Like the radiator from which steam is rising
And you are cold like a refrigerator,
When the two of you in discord
Fly at each other's throat,
Wait for the way I'll haunt you
 like a ghost always in embrace
And marvel at my vengeance.

The way of withdrawing a heart
Is not like releasing a pawned article ;
It is not like, after an agreed term
Giving up the lease of a land.
Even if you drive away the coloniser
His impression and tradition are indelible.

The News Of Sir C. V. Raman's Death

There wa tard cold,
the morning I read the news of Raman's death ;
pondering over the inexplicable existence,
unable to stand my vague restlessness,
I went out for a walk.
The streets posed the usual way ; and
I was unhappy
as I felt none else was unhappy.

A mile further
I met Hanuma of Navule village whom I knew quite
well.

He works in the fields for some one else,
he keeps a beedi over his ear,
and scratches his thigh furiously ;
He is queer
as if the village has attained a human form.

He was chasing the birds away
with Practiced, monotonous, raucous shouts ;
Humming tunelessly an outdated rhyme
He was trimming the beds as he dug the field.

Smiling he asked me 'how do you do?'

'You are scarce these days,

You seem to have grown thin,' he said;

'We don't need the rains anymore', he said.

He estimated the crop;

He grumbled that he is sick of his bickering neighbour;

He said this and that—he bored me to death—

I hemmed and hawed. I became dull like the sun
in a fog.

I was about to utter 'Raman is dead';

I checked myself and tried to be dumb.

Can his unskilled intellect

grasp the significance of Raman's death?

There was Raman and here is Hanuma :

Whole day he toils

in the water-logged fields and soils himself.

He eats

What I would even hate to think of touching;

At night he drinks illicit liquor.

For him day-after-tomorrow would be tomorrow,

tomorrow would be today,

today would become yesterday.

For him Raman's or Russel's death means the same,

Since he can forget the world because of its mono-
tonous repetition.

He doesn't read the papers; He doesn't know
that I am a poet;

He doesn't understand the appetite and disquiet
which are beyond the necessities of daily bread ;
He has no finesse
to respond to contemporary events,
He has no problem
of living on many mental planes—
Still he is content.....

Land, Zamindar, wife with sagging breasts,
Kids with running noses,
rustic-concept of God and the Village bosses
—such is his universe—
still he is Content.
Kannada, border dispute, rivers,
Poetry and Prestige
do not bother him.

Blouse for his wife, eldest son's schooling,
The money he owes to Haleshi
for his so-called coffee,
tasteless food—by all this
—not that he is not worried—
still he is content.....

Admiring and at the same time
grudging him, I walked on :
From a distance, amidst the endless variety of nature,
I could see Hanuma enveloped in mist,
his shouts had become thin like hair
—a meaningless dot.

I'll be transferred from here one day,
Hanuma will die someday—I wouldn't know.
A familiar person here, I will be a stranger there,
somewhere I'll die and no one will know.
No one will know my name, my profession,
my poems, my tensions and my private life.
This familiar sky, this cocoanut tree,
this canal, this hill and this hut—
the generosity they taught me
The meanings they showed me
and the emotions they charged me with—
no one will know.

As I walked slowly, alone, with an asphyxiating
feeling,

The intensity and the agitation
caused by Raman's death
melted away.

N. S. Lakshminarayana Bhatta

Vision

Half asleep, half awake ; the path of drowsiness
Leads to a frightening depth.
In the mad dance of the fairies
Logic is humiliated,
Mathematics is exhausted.
What is known is mixed up,
The unknown is revealed,
In this factory of dreams.

In this unfathomable sunken well
There are forms without shapes ;
What is happening is inexpressible.

Snake pits with shining black eyes
Swallow the secrets,
Forests sing of darkness

Defying the stars.
There is a decrepit Banyan
With unkempt hair,
And here is a palatial building
With noseless air.

Long ago these ships
Had walked on the waters,
Then they were wrecked.
Corpses sprouted all over the ruins.
Beasts sing in the blood of men,
Bodiless birds curse their hunger,
Rocks receive lips to get dead drunk,
Tree faces whistle from the branches and trunk.
Truth and lie walk about hand in hand,
Damn it, I don't care to understand.

Voices

Did earth and water speak from the navel of midnight?
When ego crossed the boundaries of daylight
Did it feel choked? Did logic die?
When the snake pit was shaken up
Did it wake up the sleeping snake-songs?
Did the giant sky open its million eyes?
Did the moon's hands
Caress the sprained heart of the Earth?

At this time
You have come O Paradoxes, welcome!
I know, you will drive me to seclusion
I know, you will never be understood.
But why do you plague me?

O inexplicable secrets
That appear slowly in the clouds,
O cries of rivers and hills,
O cruel ones,
Why do you plough my heart?
Why do you grow sleepless pains?
Why do you dislike my joy
When the Earth clasps me?

You move with your placid faces
As if to frighten compassion-seekers.
Are you demons who pose like gentlemen ?
Do you come to tempt me to break the taboos ?

O nameless desires born in a rainless time
Why do you haunt me ?
After haunting me why do you pull a long face
As if to seek my pardon ?

Are you only appearances of clouds as Rishies
Shaped by the dying light of the tapering moon ?
O Rishies
O voices which have conquered hell,
How can I treat you ?
My learning is shabby,
How should I greet you ?

O abstract purposes
You stand on the corpses of momentary truths,
You sweep the atoms of our earth.
How can I express what you mean to me ?
Why do you vanish when daylight comes ?

Chandrashekar Kambor

Recognition

You swear while you speak to me
And raise a million hopes
But you are a celluloid image
whom I cannot hold.

When you spread half a litre of moonshine
with your broad fake smile
I stand blinking before you like a fool.

You are the monsoon that awakens the greenery
and the flowers with your kisses,
I am the sandy dryland.

You are drawing the creator scrawled
When he was a child,
I am a scholar of alphabets.

You are such a cliché of old poets
which never existed ;
Be that as it may, I am a connoisseur.

Will it be the same river in another moment ?
You are a living commentary of such a river.
I am the page on which it is written.

You press your lips to mine, you caress me
And match your thrills with mine.
You speak to me and disappear. You are a dream.
I am youth itself with itching lips.

Who you are and what your name is, I learnt
only of late. You are a deceased memory.
I am the tomb where you are buried.

Mao Tse Tung

Mao Tse Tung

Even if I want to forget you and sing
can I ever forget you Mao Tse Tung ?

You discovered the five elements cheating,
you deciphered a new world in the askant look,
You said you could give shape to nothingness,
You said you would even wail the space,
To create the living and the non-living
You said you would bring a new sun.

You built a dam across a river of tears,
You built a bank agianst the inundating blood,
You stood in the deep waters
made yourhead a wick and set it aflame.
You broke down people and made a chariot.
Along with the ten horses of the avatars
You yellow god, brought another ten
and declared yourself a sun.

You set fire and stood on the fence,
You finished off the famous ones,
You did not hesitate for adhoc solution

And you brought down heaven.
You sowed it yellow and you grew it yellow
Even the hedge had yellow flowers.
You changed the name of all the colours
You couldn't see your own Jaundiced eye.

King of beggars with worn brows,
King of pot-bellies with hungry stomach,
You were born everyday and everyday you died.
You made wet the eyes of news,
You taught half the world die,
You didn't learn how to die.
There was a crown on the wall you built,
You became a legend while you were alive,
You vanished into the empty space,
After the blaze just the light remains.

Siddalinga Pattanashetty

The Eighth One

Hey, baby, among the girls who have forgotten me
Do you know your rank? Are you the eighth one?
You know your place.

Drawing me into conversation you fed me with sweets.
You were sweeter than the sweetest sweet,
And you carried me away on the waves of smiles.

Wearing a green sarree with a golden edge
Now you move away
Provoking me to take my revenge.

Hey baby, you are too young.
Every time I search out one like you
I get duped. How about you?

Moral of a Flood

An unfaithful wife, a girl-friend who has
Trapped me and this girl who flowers
Into a smile whenever we meet -
I want all these to keep me fresh.
The village tank which is full to the brim
Needs three or four sluices to be open.
Feeling the water all over me I get thrilled.
The married woman, the patient girl and the
specialist
In postponements, have all given me the courage
To hold my head high. They have removed
The weeds around me enabling my healthy growth.
They trust me and I also trust them.
Only I know that I don't know the game
I am playing with all these.
I need them and we should always be together.
This is the moral of a flood.
And I don't care for Time.

K. V. Tirumalesh

Untouchables

"Beware of Dogs; Beware"

The sign is there.

Why do you stand behind the sign

And scream at us "Beware of Dogs" ?

What have we done

Except crossing this street ?

We just walk along this street.

We talk when the silence is terrible.

We laugh once in a way lest we should weep.

Why do you let the dogs on us ?

Sir, we know the dogs are there,

Sir we know the dogs are yours,

We know you have dogs and you have cars,

We know you have posh hotels

And you are the Gods of the cabaret Heaven.

Sir, we are only on the street, we of the untouchable
class.

Why do you stare at us as if we are strangers ?
We know each other since ancient time when
Long ago in Babylon we turned your mills,
You auctioned us in market places.
Our backs are bent at your service.
We are afraid our children
Might inherit the bent back.

Is your shouting that the dogs are there
Your way of conciliation with us ?
But that is not the language we understand.
You say we don't understand you.
Alright go in speaking,
Someday without your willingness and without your
effort
You may be able to communicate to us.

After all what have we done ?
Just because we are crossing the street,
Why do you scream at us ?
Literature, Culture, Wealth and authority are all yours.
Revolutions have come
Revolutions have come and gone.
Because the revolutions have come and gone your
number has grown
And is still growing,
still, why do you scream ?

**You are afraid that history is going to take a new turn,
you are afraid that time will not stand still
And something is going to happen ;
We know this already.**

**Since you know that we know all this
When you see us, a strange ghostly illumination
Is on your face ;
It is but natural.**

Psalm

Use my head for a gourd
Use my nerves for strings
And make me sing your tunes.

Call it a puppet-play
And make me dance till I am exhausted ;
Making me a servant of your servant
Sit on my head.

Boil my blood into tar
To pour it on your roads ;
Run your Imphala on it

Prepare slippers from my skin
And wear them.

Take my muscle, take my flesh.
Cook it if you want it
And eat it till you belch.

Take my bones O Lord,
Its soup is good for your health.

To a Bed Bug

O Bed Bug stop for a minute,
I have a few questions, please answer them.
You have feasted on my blood,
I don't care whether I have the right to

Question you or not.

Once there was a poet called Donne

Who experienced union with his beloved
In the blood a mosquito had sucked.

If that is ture, listen to me :

In the blood you have sucked from me
With how many have I joined ?

There was another fellow called pythagoras
Who said something about the transmigration
of soul.

When my blood flowed in your body

Did I become you ?

Just as the tea Mrs X drinks becomes Mrs X

Did my blood become a bed bug ?

'Thou art that ' 'I am Brahma ' they say :

What does it mean ?

What's the secret of your life ?

H. S. Venkatesha Murthy

My Love

Because I love you
The cheeks of the sky turn rosy.

Because I love you
The image of the sun comes down to enter
the dew drop.

Because I love you
The space bird covers the whole world
with its warm wings.

Because I love you
The same sun who sets in the West
rises in the East.

The Outside World

The jasmine that has just now
Burst into a smile, silvery laughter,
variety in Nature, the world reflected in the eyes
But which remains always outside....
Tell me, how can I make you my own ?

The muddy field after the rain,
And the green grass on the mound,
The buried seeds that stretch their legs,
And the painful weeping hut,
And the shake-gourd that hangs
from a weak support —
Tell me how can I make you my own ?

O oven that fills with smoke
And lets the fire die out,
Bastards who don't recognise their parents,
And the navel that has sunk in the bare belly,
And the people who have been cutting stones,
And the foundation that has been carrying
the weight of the high tower,
O fields with ploughs on the shoulders,

And restless hands that disturb the calm
waters of the soul,
And every object that surrounds me.
Tell me, how can I make you my own?

Though your image is caught by the eye
You remain in your place
And you preserve your originality.
O you stones, soils, plants and trees
sparrow, crow, woodpecker,
Cockroach, Bee and Cricket
How can I make you my own?
Without making you my own
How can I preserve my poise?

B. R. Lakshmana Rao

Dialogue

The foundation is strong and the roof is all right,

Sit down, I'll tell you a story

Look ! Atlas is carrying the sky on his shoulder

Poor Atlas ! I'll tell you his story.

Atlas accosted brave Hercules :

" What cheat you are !

You fooled me with nice words and escaped this
weight

By transferring the sky to my shoulder.

Look, how from times immemorial

This back is bent with this dead weight !

Though my body is hard like stone, there is a mind,
you see !

There I have many a burning wound.

You too are heartless, like my fate
You could never feel for me. Yes, I'm to be blamed ;
To carry out your request I went to the corner of
of the world
And I brought you three golden apples.

I Knew full well, with those golden apples
You would conquer heavenly women ;
You will taste their company, good ale and excellent
food,
Besides you will be remembered as a great adventurer.

Do you know how angry I become, once in a way ?
If I shake off this weight and stand erect
You will be under the sunken roof ; your world,
Cu ture and civilisation will all be smashed.

But alas ! My fate is such that this sky
Has stuck to my shoulder, as skin to my flesh !
Will I be released from this slavery ?
O cruel fate ! ”

Brave Hercules said to Atlas :
“ O my unfortunate friend,
Don't blame this stranger unnecessarily
And without knowing the details.

The whole world praises me
As a brave man born to gods.
But who can separate the external shine
From the inner pain except me the sufferer ?

While returning Hercules by chance lifted his head
And screamed and started running.
Like a sinking roof or like a huge stone slab
The sky was mercilessly descending.

Hey, why did you shiver as if there was an
earthquake?

May be somebody exploded a cracker.

The foundation is strong, the roof is secure.

Please sit down, be calm and listen to the rest of
the story.

**My Darling, where will all This
End ?**

My poor darling,
My father's golden frames might find you ugly ;
But I want only you.

My dad is stricken by the leprosy of tradition,
And my bookfed brain is sprouting a revolution.

I Hercules; told Atlas
"Father, if you fetch me my darling
I'm ready to bear the weight
Of your lifeless tradition.
Without protest I'll obey all your orders."

If my dad were Atlas
He would have agreed.
But he's like Yayati.

He wants to suck my youth
And thrust upon me the ashes of oldage ;
I'm ready to spring beyond his walls
And to piss upon his advises
Which spring from his thick skull.

**My mother streams tears,
And my head is full of questioning worms :
Will your love substitute the love of my father,
 mother, brother and sister ?
Will Time guarantee it ?
Who knows my darling, where all this will end ?**

Doddarange Gowda

Coorg

During my journey in Coorg
I felt thrilled looking at the poems fog had written:

Early in the morning, opening the doors of light
The sun had played hide and seek—

On the slopes the coffee plants
Had opened the shop of greenery
And they had decked themselves with white flowers
And they were swaying, where they stood
Talking softly to each other —

Breaking the silence of the dark forest
Waterfalls were engaged in a running race —

The orange groves of Coorg
were displaying a few children

whispering among themselves
And they were preghant —
While I sat on Raja Seat
the more I counted, the more they seemed to be
shining snaky-roads.

Wherever I turned
I could see the sources of its beauty
with their dream like smiles—
With lovely gait walked the youths
As if each one was an Eros.

Besides these poems
I heard countless other poems as I roamed about
Coorg.

Jayasudarshana

My Heart

O my heart
Like the sea you related me to the depths
And to the wide unceasing roaring restlessness.
How can I forget how much I wandered in your
company,

How many shores I touched
And how many harbours I deserted?
O heart,
Seeped in joy, naked in your company
I have been alone.
You who have made my roamring soul settle down
Tell me how I can ever forget you.

My heart,
You are incapable of thinking,
Your feelings are faster than the flights of mind.

When you quivered with love
I was afire with intense feelings
And I held my soul on my palm.

What use is my soul's dependence on you
Unless another soul comes to it to breathe together?
Unless breath supports breath
Will the sickly blue sky
Turn rosy in the evening?

O my heart
Sometimes through the hole in you
Angry blood rushes to the lungs
To spring from there to the throat.
You have stuck your flag in my nails
The flag of deathly blue.
When the deathly blue joins the blood
The distance between the sky and the eye
diminishes.
Will it solve the riddle of my birth
with my death ?

* * * *

O my heart
Even by mistake don't be sorry to die,
Don't be sorry for the ups and downs of life,
and for the end that is there in the
beginning of the cycle of life.

Don't attribute your own limits to creation.

Let not the darkness of your weariness

Blind my sight.

There is no use pitying the rashness of love

And pitying the mother earth swallowing
her own children.

Siddalingaih

My People

They carry stones for building sites
They get kicked until they swoon
They die from hunger, My people.
They excavate gold, but they don't get a meal ;
They weave cloth, but they go naked, My people.

They plough the fields and they sow the seeds
They cut the crops and they are baked in the sun,
My people.

They come home empty handed
They heave a deep deep sigh
They live in misery, My people.

They build the shops and they raise the bungalows
They get into heavy debts, My people.
When they collapse on the street, they don't cry for
help they suppress their cries ; My people.

They pay interest through their noses,
They become ash in the fire of fiery speeches,
My people.

For the God-loving men who eat their fill
They prepare foot-wear, My people.

They fall at others' feet, and they get kicked
They are so devoted, people.
They listen to anything said to them
They live on air, My people.

Ambedkar

O Banyan, broad as the sky
O scream of anguish
That sprang from the bowels of the land,
The first utterance of the blacks
Which crossed the clouds and seas,
You made the sleepers sit up,
But who will make them stand up?

The thunder that reverberated
From the Maharashtra skies,
Why couldn't you bring the rain?
Why did you disappear with a flash?

You turned the soil
With the plough of your self-respect;
You planted the sapplings too,
But you were not there to take care of the crop!

You made the lying-low sit up
But who will make them stand up?
Who will teach them the need of guts
and strong muscles?

I must have a word with you

**I must have a word with you
O, Cactuses and Thorny plants ;
I must put a question to the moon
Who borrows his light ;
I should free the beautiful rose
from thorns.**

**Wells are waterless and ministers speechless
Constables move about like thorny bushes,
O word, I must have a word with you.**

**From the white clouds which crowd
like political speeches
Streams are not swelled
And green is not nourished.**

**Who has stopped the timely rain ?
Who has slashed the stars with rainbow ?
Who is hiding the sun so that
darkness may bloat and bulge ?**

Mango and Jack fruit have been robbed
By those who are delivering souls
which are neither male nor female.
O world, I must get to know you
And I must have a word with you.

Ramjan Darga.

Hallo Madam

Hallo Madam, how do you do ?
Does your dog relish his bread ?
Is your car trouble free ?
Have you moved to the new house ?

Do you say it is a volley of questions ?
No, no, Mam, please don't think so.
This is 'Pure poetry'
untouched by politics.

I will not write about my people who build your house,
who are your domestic servants,
or who supply you milk.
I will not write about my people who repair your car,
who work day and night to bring your "Pure literature"
into book form,

or about those who weave your saree.
I will not write about them
Because ' class-consciousness ' might interfere,
Politics might enter,
And my ' Pure poetry ' might become impure.
Don't you agree with me, Mam?
or would you say "you can't avoid politics". ?

If that is true, what shall I do Madam?
If you go straight, they say,
You come to the starting point.
Shall I wait till then ?

Then,
When human beings come back to the starting point,
there won't be any politics.
There will be hair all over the body,
stones in both hands,
and bits of flesh in their mouths.
Yes Madam, There won't be any politics.

And those days will harvest ' Pure poetry. '
If that is the case, Madam, tell me,
What shall I do ?

Whenever

Whenever

I remember you
O death ?
I remember the sprouts
that have to turn green
and growing children.

Whenever

I remember you
O death !
every part of this earth
looks beautiful
and every moment seems precious.

Whenever

I remember you
O death !
I want to bring back to earth
the dreams of our people
which have spread over the milky ways.

Whenever

I remember you

O death !

**I want to collect all the poisonous souls
that are advocates of inequality,
to transfer them to you**

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E R R A T A

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
1	15	belong the	belong to the
24	23	To gain	To gaint
25	10	nanished	banished
25	26	obstinence	abstinence
29	13	aud	and
31	11	Mother carth	Mother earth
34	4	News from the beyond the stars and neblae	News from beyond the Stars and the neblae
36	6	monotone, Lullabies	monotone lullabies
36	25	tnmbled	tumbled
39	15 - 17	Searching	Scorching
40	15	crystal-strong- pearl-shell-petal	a beutiful pearl
41	12	it s	it is
42	1	role on	roll on
47	1	aea-saw	sea-saw
47	4th section starts after the 18th line		
47	21	fact and life-style	fate and life-style

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
57	12	dri k that wa er	drink that water
60	25	qandcuffs	handcuffs
62	2	Grow watever	Grow whatever
65	13	the accidental	In the accidental
67	9	Shadows terrible	Shadows of terrible
68	9	country	Country
69	5	which can the	which can keep the
69	11	Campost	Compost
71	13	when I lay my	when I lay on my
73	8	o long as he	as long as
80	21	memoring	memories
82	Title	Pand uand Madri	Pandu and Mandri
87	10	things at a skaos	things at a short
90	18	lap	lamp
104	21	when sit yawning	when we sit yawning
106	3	Leaving me conte- mplete	Leaving me to contemplate
118	8	did not other us.	did not bother us.
123	9	from caves	from caves
129	20	glaming inno- cence	gleaming innocence

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
139	18	Youe back masses	Your black masses
144	3	releasing pawned article	releasing a pawned article
155	11	you are drawing	you are a drawing
158	10	the world die	the world to die
163	6	when yon see us	when you see us
167	10	Shake-gourd	Snake-gourd
175	3	opeuing	opening
177	11	roamring	roaming
183	Title	yau	you
191	17	Borivity	Borivily

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ಮುಖಪುಟ ಚಿತ್ರ: ಕೃಷಿ ಪೂಜಾರಿ

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ಮುದ್ರಣ: ಬೃಂದಾವನ ಪ್ರಿಂಟರ್ಸ್ ಅಂಡ್ ಪಬ್ಲಿಕೇಷನ್ಸ್ (ಪ್ರೈ.) ಲಿ. ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು - 560 004